

THE PATHOLOGY OF FEAR: DISEASE AND AMERICAN DIS-EASE
AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Fear is a productive power through which morality, law, and the state are founded and maintained. Focusing on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Anglo-Saxon American men's pathological fear of disease ranging from neurasthenia and hysteria to bubonic plague, this dissertation suggests that turn-of-the-century medical discourse, manifesting the age's ideological evaluation of vice and virtue, was instrumental in shaping and sustaining the racial and sexual order of American society. The pseudo-scientific discourse of imagined immunities or vulnerabilities to these diseases, conceived as the bodily evidence of racial and sexual difference, entailed imagined communities and hierarchies among the different races and sexes.

Reading Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward 2000-1887*, Gertrude Stein's "Melantha: Each One As She May," and Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith* as medical records, this study identifies the heightened nativist, racist, misogynist, and imperialist impulses of turn-of-the-century America channeled through the knowledge of psychopathology, neurology, bacteriology, and immunology. The symptoms and treatments of neurasthenia, hysteria, and bubonic plague portrayed in these fictions ventriloquize the American dis-eases over overcivilized effeminacy and racial and national decadence, originating as a response to the threats posed by immigrants, women's advancement, and the closure of the frontier. A clinical diagnosis of the sleepless hero in *Looking Backward* as a neurasthenic, the epitome of the bodily weakness and racial superiority of the Anglo-Saxon American, addresses the

collaboration between contemporary racial ideas and medical and hygienic theories which served to shape the design of Bellamy's ethnocentric utopia. This dissertation then argues that Melanctha Herbert in her namesake short story was modeled on the representative characteristics of a hysterical woman through which Anglo-Saxon American men reconfirmed their privileged position in society. Focusing on the bubonic plague that represented an alien threat to the American body and body politic in the 1900s, I, in the following chapter, read *Arrowsmith* as the narrative of an American imperialist doctor whose quest for immunity laid the foundation of the empire and its biopolitical sovereignty. Not only did these diseases work as a metaphor for American fears of heterogeneity, but they also functioned as a regenerative device that rendered white American ideals and values more dynamic and resilient.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
1. The Productive Power of Fear	1
2. Disease, Immunity, and Cultural Anxiety	9
II THE PATHOLOGY OF UTOPIA: NEURASTHENIA, NATIVISM, AND FRONTIER IN EDWARD BELLAMY’S <i>LOOKING BACKWARD 2000-1887</i>	27
1. Hygiene and Health: A Utopia without Insomnia	34
2. An Ethnocentric Utopia: Neurasthenia and America Anxiety.....	47
3. The Frontiers of Utopia.....	64
III A CASE HISTORY OF A MULATTO HYSTERIC: RACIAL AND SEXUAL POLITICS IN GERTRUDE STEIN’S “MELANCTHA”	75
1. A Medical Record of Hysteria	81
2. Nervousness and Skin Hierarchy	96
3. Racial Displacement of Jewish Self-hatred	108
IV THE IMMUNITY OF EMPIRE: TROPICAL MEDICINE AND BIOPOLITICS IN SINCLAIR LEWIS’S <i>ARROWSMITH</i>	124
1. A “Microbe Hunter” in the Tropical Frontier	131
2. Contagion, Immunity, and Race	139
3. Tropical Bacteriology: The Emissary of Empire	147
4. Biopolitics: Martin Arrowsmith the Eugenicist.....	158

	Page
V CONCLUSION	171
WORKS CITED.....	179

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1	
Advertisement for Dr. Ransophier's Electronic Magnetic Appliance, <i>The New Nation</i> , Vol. III (1893).....	28
Figure 2	
Photographies of Jean-Martin Charcot's Augustine Performing the Theatrical Symptoms of Hysteria, Désiré-Magloire Bourneville and Paul Regnar, <i>Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière</i> , Vol. II (1878).....	93

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Productive Power of Fear

In his recent work, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, examining Thomas Hobbes's understanding of fear, places fear "at the origin not only of the degenerate or defective forms of the state but above all, its legitimate and positive forms" (22).

[F]ear doesn't only have a destructive charge but also a constructive one.

It doesn't only cause flight and isolation, but it also causes relation and union. It isn't limited to blocking and immobilizing, but, on the contrary, it pushes to reflect and neutralize danger. It doesn't reside on the side of the irrational but on the side of the rational. It is a productive power. (23)

Fear constructs a "relation and union" among people since, when afraid, we tend to believe false information easily and become united, not because we share similar beliefs, but because we are equally threatened. For Hobbes, fear is a "productive power," the basis of morality, law, and the state, which binds and ensures a social order. It appears initially as a reaction to the real danger of death, which ends up originating and elucidating the covenant between people and state that Hobbes called "the great Leviathan," and then propagates secondary and additional fears with incalculable fecundity to protect and maintain the covenant. These new objects of fear are, in most cases, fundamentally empty, meaning that people's fear has a theatrical quality. "Political fear depended upon illusion, where danger was magnified, even exaggerated,

by the state,” remarks Corey Robin (33). There is always “a necessary but subtle distortion” through which the state persuades people to fear certain objects over others and generates a hope that the fear may be eliminated or overcome (33).

Society is built upon fixed objects of fear chosen and distorted subtly but significantly. In this sense, Esposito claims that “What distinguishes a despotic state from a legitimate one is not ... the absence of fear or its lessening, but the uncertainty (or certainty) of its object and its limits” (*Communitas* 25). “The state’s task,” he continues by referencing Franz Neumann’s distinction between neurotic *Angst* and *Realangst*, “is not to eliminate fear but to render it ‘certain’” by posing *Realangst* on its people (*Communitas* 25).¹ *Realangst* or “realistic anxiety,” according to Sigmund Freud’s theory, from which Neumann’s distinction and term derive, refers to “a reaction to the perception of an external danger” that “strikes us as something very rational and intelligible” (*SE* 16: 393-94). Bound up psychically with particular events or objects, it functions adaptively as the ego’s defensive response, which calls for motor action that evades the actual danger.

As Freud elaborated in his articles “Repression” (1915) and “The Unconscious” (1915), as well as in the twenty-fifth lecture of *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916-17), “realistic anxiety” is distinct from “neurotic anxiety,” which, corresponding literally and by definition to Neumann’s neurotic *Angst*, is “a kind of freely floating anxiety which is ready to attach itself to any idea” (*SE* 16: 398).² Neurotic

¹ See Franz Neumann, *The Democratic and the Authoritarian State: Essays in Political and Legal Theory*, particularly its fifth chapter, “Anxiety and Politics.”

² Freud’s distinction between neurotic anxiety and realistic anxiety was an elaborated form of the

anxiety is a response to the remotest, or impossible threat to the imaginary integrity of the body and to the unity of the ego; it is, to put it simply, the fear of something that is nothing. According to Charles Shepherdson, Freud considered neurotic anxiety as a temporal structure, “a mode of waiting or distressed anticipation,” dubbing it “expectant anxiety” or “anxious expectation” to emphasize its connection with an imagined threat which is believed to be impending from the future (xxviii). It is not a natural or adaptive phenomenon, but a unique symptom of the human being that discloses the imaginary structure of the ego and constructs the feeling of anxiety as an enigma or a riddle “whose solution would be bound to throw a flood of light on our whole mental experience” (*SE* 16: 393).³ Neurotic anxiety puts people, to draw on Dominick LaCapra’s words, in

distinction between anxiety (*Angst*) and fear (*Furcht*) he drew in terms of their connection with an object. While anxiety is an elusive affect related to the absence and indeterminacy of an object, fear is a state of mind closely related to the specific object that causes a threat to the subject. The lack of a consistent definition of anxiety, however, caused the terms “anxiety” and “fear” to be distinguished loosely with varying definitions throughout Freud’s writings. A translator’s note by Alix Strachey duly attests to the lack of a clear demarcation between them: “It has not been possible in translation to render the German ‘*Angst*’ invariably by ‘anxiety’” and therefore “throughout out the *Standard Edition*, the word has sometimes been translated by ‘fear’ or by phrases including the word ‘afraid’” (*SE* 20: 165). Given that we tend to perceive “anxiety” as an umbrella notion that encompasses all kinds of “fear,” this terminological confusion might be a natural consequence and it is more or less impossible to draw a distinct line between them in one’s psyche except in a phenomenological sense. Accordingly, reflecting our intuitive understanding of the overlapping relationship between anxiety and fear, Freud invented the new distinction discussed above.

³ Søren Kierkegaard designated “nothing,” in an aphoristic manner, as a cause of anxiety (to be precise, neurotic anxiety) in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1884). In the primordial state of a spirit, Kierkegaard wrote,

there is peace and repose, but there is simultaneously something else that is not contention and strife, for there is indeed nothing against which to strive. What, then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that is at the same time anxiety. (41)

Kierkegaard’s account dramatizes the necessary leap from innocence, a moment when anxiety occurs, signaling a free human-being’s profound spiritual condition of insecurity in the face of God. It is no less a statement confirming anxiety to be affect, which is, in a special way, revelatory of the human condition. In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger, similarly, elaborated

“paradise absence” (706). Unlike “paradise lost,” which is, as its name suggests, equipped with a loss through which people can imagine a utopia without a certain threat or danger, “paradise absence” lacks a loss and thus fails to evoke a specified fear that founds what Esposito calls a legitimate society. In “paradise absence,” one faces “the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted” (LaCapra 698). “Paradise absence” cannot be “regained in some hoped-for, apocalyptic future” which “will bring total renewal, salvation, or redemption” (LaCapra 706).

The formation of fear (in other words, the transformation of a neurotic anxiety into a realistic anxiety) attests to an element of creativity inherent in fear, which manifests itself through the act of “constructing a phobic object in which anxiety can be expelled and partially contained” (Shepherdson xx).⁴ Locating a particular thing to be

on anxiety as *Stimmung* (moods) that would disclose something essential about man’s existence as a whole, seeing “being anxious” as “a way of being-in-the-world” (178). Stressing that our having anxiety is “our potentiality-for-being-in-the-world,” he claimed that “the complete phenomenon of *Angst* ... shows Da-sein as factual, existing being-in-the-world” (178). For Heidegger, *Stimmung* also means the mood of a community or era (the *Zeitgeist*), which opens a space for discussion of the socio-ontological condition of the state.

⁴ Castration anxiety is a representative neurotic anxiety that is a locus of creativity. In “Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy” (1909), Freud examined the case of Little Hans who, in the stage of the Oedipus complex, develops a sexual intention toward his mother and an aggressive inclination toward his father, seeing him as a powerful rival. The guilt feeling about the wish for his father’s death induces the young boy to suffer from anxiety over castration, an anxiety rooted in the fantasy of the fragmented body. In the grip of such anxiety lacking “an object to begin with,” little Hans necessarily “cannot tell what he is afraid of” at first (*SE* 10: 25). Pointing out the connection between such infantile anxiety and the neurotic anxiety of adults, Freud thus argued that the ego needs to resolve neurotic anxiety into realistic anxiety to activate the defensive mechanism (*SE* 16: 408). Castration anxiety, as a consequence, is replaced by a misrecognized object—in Hans’s case, by the fear of being bitten by a horse, the “misrecognized” symbol of his father. “The anxiety felt in animal phobias,” as an affective

feared as a way for the ego to defend itself in many cases imposes the imaginary blame for “a putative loss onto identifiable others, thereby inviting the generation of scapegoating or sacrificial scenarios” (LaCapra 707). The phobic object as a virtual source of fear, variably articulated depending on which “others” or scapegoats the ego chooses, lays a foundation for morals, religion, and ethics of the society, as impressively elaborated by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontent* (1930) and *Totem and Taboo* (1913). It is “flight and isolation” from the feared “others,” in the words of Esposito, which drive the collectively threatened people to create “relation and union” among themselves. Indeed, we can analyze a society’s belief system by identifying its phobic objects of fear.

Among many sources of fear, the most common and effective is probably disease that poses an imminent, reasonable threat of pain and loss of life. Experienced intuitively by the body in the form of wound, spasm, stiffness, and swelling, disease renders people to seek “flight and isolation” more immediately than other objects of fear such as nature or an angry God. Besides, disease functions as a powerful metaphor through which one can “enliven charges that a society was corrupt or unjust” and “specify an ideal of

reaction on the part of ego to the threat of castration, “differs in no respect from the realistic anxiety which the ego normally feels in situation of danger, except that its content remains unconscious and only becomes conscious in the form of a distortion” (*SE* 20: 126). Hence Hans’s equinophobia, imagining a substitutive object of fear, presents the dialectical dynamics between neurotic anxiety and realistic anxiety, which is governed by the reality principle. Consider, also, the behavior of Freud’s one-and-a-half-year old grandson who compensates for the uncontrolled comings and goings of his mother by throwing and retrieving the bobbin attached to a string, uttering the sounds interpreted as meaning “fort”(gone) and “da”(there). To make a long story included in Freud’s essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920) short, the child’s act of substituting the bobbin for the mother demonstrates anxiety’s innate ability to distort, to sublimate, and to create, obtaining its impetus from the ego’s imagination in accordance with the reality principle (*SE* 18:14-16).

society's well-being, analogized to physical health" (Sontag 72, 76). As Susan Sontag points out, "Any disease that is treated as a mystery and acutely enough feared" was understood and "felt to be morally, if not literally, contagious," mirroring the political and cultural dis-ease of a society (Sontag 6). Regarded invariably as judgments on society, plagues were believed to reveal and punish moral laxity.

Fatal disease had often been connected with immigrants, outcasts, other races, and women, who were alleged to threaten the (racial and sexual) order and homogeneity of society. Just as "Oedipus," as René Girard puts it in *Violence and the Sacred*, "becomes the repository of all the community's ills" manifested by the plague in Thebes, strangers and disorderly women are forced to play the role of the surrogate victim who is "responsible for the ills that have befallen" (76-77). For threatened people, the association between foreignness and disease was less a metaphor and more a metonymy of cause and effect. Sontag thus writes: "Authoritarian political ideologies have a vested interest in promoting fear, a sense of the imminence of takeover by aliens—and real diseases are useful material. Epidemic diseases usually elicit a call to ban the entry of foreigners, immigrants. And xenophobic propaganda has always depicted immigrants as bearers of disease" (149-50). Likewise, the conception of unruly women as a disease itself, a vile invader of the social body, and a threat to traditional masculine authority had permeated the society at large, legitimizing physical, legal, and cultural constraints on women.

Given that "the point of intersection between political knowledge and medical knowledge is the common problem of preserving the body" that "takes on a central role

precisely from the perspective opened up by disease,” the metonymic relationship between disease and political dis-ease is not surprising (Esposito, *Immunitas* 121-22). Even after Robert Koch and Louis Pasteur advocated the germ theory of disease in the mid-nineteenth century, which taught people to see vehement bodily pain and death as direct products of pathogenic bacteria declared to be responsible for particular diseases, medicine hardly denounced the metonymic properties of disease. Rather, the logic supporting the politicization of disease has become more sophisticated as medical knowledge has become more complex and at the same time—built on bacteria invisible to the naked eye—has remained mysterious and incomprehensible to common people. Moreover, modern medicine discovered or invented diverse mental illnesses whose symptoms are not necessarily related to bacteria by developing diagnostic criteria that deal mainly with moral issues rather than physical issues. Diagnosing certain specific attitudes, behaviors, and conditions as being sick and in need of cure, psychiatric discourse and practice since the start of the nineteenth century broadened the categories of mental diseases to include mood disorders and thereby worked to buttress racial, gender, and class hierarchies, as will be discussed later in detail.⁵ “Medicine,” argues Michel Foucault, “is a power-knowledge that can be applied to both the body and the population, both the organism and biological processes,” which therefore has “both disciplinary effects and regulatory effects” (*Society* 252).

To put it differently, medicine is a power-knowledge that establishes the society’s immune systems, in the words of Donna Haraway, “a map drawn to guide

⁵ See, among others, Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-1974*.

recognition and misrecognition of self and other in the dialects of Western biopolitics” (204). Paraphrasing Niklas Luhmann’s thesis on the semantics of immunity, Esposito claims that “systems function not by rejecting conflicts and contradiction, but by producing them as necessary antigens for reactivating their own antibodies” (*Bios* 49).

It[immunization] saves, insures, and preserves the organism, either individual or collective, to which it pertains, but it does not do so directly, immediately, or frontally; on the contrary, it subjects the organism to a condition that simultaneously negates or reduces its power to expand. Just as in the medical practice of vaccinating the individual body, so the immunization of the political body functions similarly, introducing within it a fragment of the same pathogen from which it wants to protect itself, by blocking and contradicting natural development. (Esposito, *Bios* 46)

As a negative form of the protection of life, immunity cannot be obtained without a fragment of pathogen that threatens the normal functioning of the political body.

Likewise, “[t]o survive, the community, every community,” Esposito remarks, “is forced to introject the negative modality of its opposite, even if the opposite remains precisely a lacking and contrastive mode of being of the community itself” (*Bios* 52). As suggested by Sontag, foreigners, immigrants, racial minorities, and unruly women have often been imagined as pathogens which invite “conflicts and contradiction” between the self and other, giving rise to “relation and union” among the threatened selves. Timothy Campbell thus argues, expounding Esposito’s theory, that “immunity is coterminous with community” (4).

2. Disease, Immunity, and Cultural Anxiety

This dissertation demonstrates the ways in which selected diseases of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States manifested, if not constructed, the age's ideological evaluation of vice and virtue, working to sustain a political order built on racial and sexual hierarchies or, in other words, on an underlying "neurotic anxiety" about the racial and sexual heterogeneity encroaching on American life. Turn-of-the-century American medical (in many cases, pseudo-scientific) discourses imposed a subtle distortion on the etiology and diagnosis of diseases ranging from neurasthenia and hysteria to bubonic plague, associating them with specific groups of people. Conceived of as the bodily evidence of racial and sexual difference, these diseases constituted the era's representative pathological symptoms which addressed Anglo-Saxon American men's neurotic anxieties about overcivilized effeminacy and racial and national decadence, originating as a response to the threats posed by immigrants, women's advancement, and the closure of the frontier. Based on this understanding, this study seeks to demonstrate how American literary products in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1888), Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha: Each One As She May," a short story included in *Three Lives* (1909), and Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith* (1925), treat neurasthenia, hysteria, and bubonic plague, respectively, as a way to identify white middle-class American (male) anxieties over race, gender, and space that mirror traditional cultural values.

To delve into a pathological reading of these fictions, ranging from popular utopian novels to modernist and realist literary texts, my dissertation first provides a

detailed look at a newly discovered, or invented, mental illness called neurasthenia, with which late-nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon Americans were entrenched in a battle.

Popularized by iconic neurologist George M. Beard, who first used the term to medicalize a rampant cultural “dis-ease” in an 1869 speech, neurasthenia, manifesting a wide range of neurologic symptoms short of outright insanity, from simple stress to severe neuroses, characterizes a functional disorder caused by “deficiency or lack of nerve-force,” as clearly revealed by its alternative name “nervous exhaustion” (Beard, *American* vi).⁶ Interestingly, neurasthenia was considered a sort of hereditary racial disease that struck only Anglo-Saxon American men and women who expended their nerve energy in professional and intellectual work and thus could not cope with the huge amount of stimuli brought on by urban-industrial modernity. It “scarcely exists among savages or barbarians, or semi-barbarians or partially civilized people” (Beard, *American* 92). Conceived as being not so culturally and intellectually refined, immigrants and African-Americans were believed to be naturally immune to neurasthenia. In other words, neurasthenia was the representative object of medical fear affecting solely the most advanced races with delicate, highly evolved nerve systems, which therefore, paradoxically, functioned to assert the racial superiority of the patients. Fearing and

⁶ The term “neurasthenia” had appeared prior to George M. Beard, for example, in *Dunglison’s Dictionary* in 1833 “side by side with its German equivalent, *Nervenschwache*” and in a work of Gianini, a professor in Milan, published in 1808 (Gosling 26). Yet it was Beard who, taking American physician Fordyce Barker’s term “nervous asthenia,” first described “neurasthenia” as a clinical entity more scientifically than anyone before in his speech before the New York Medical Journal Association in 1869, subsequently printed as the essay “Neurasthenia, or Nervous Exhaustion” (1869) in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* and in three ensuing, somewhat redundant books, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia): Its Symptoms, Nature, Sequences, Treatment* (1880), *American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequence* (1881), and *Sexual Neurasthenia (Nervous Exhaustion), Its Hygiene, Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment* (1884).

suffering collectively and exclusively from the disease, Anglo-Saxon Americans created a “relation and union” in which they imagined and shared the sense of racial superiority and exclusive privileged status in the society.

We know that a claim to superiority often attests to anxiety about one’s precarious status. Two historical phenomena that occurred concurrently in the late nineteenth century United States invoked a collective anxiety over the encroachment of racial Others, calling forth an imminent need for Anglo-Saxon Americans to reaffirm the racist value systems of a society that was under threat: the disappearance of the frontier line and great waves of seemingly unassimilable immigrants.

As westward continental expansion was declared “completed” by the internal Census in 1890, Frederick Jackson Turner presented the “end of the frontier” thesis in his address, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” at the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. Identifying the frontier as the source of the “perennial rebirth” and “fluidity of American life,” the primary factor responsible for “the formation of a composite nationality for the American people,” Turner defined the uniqueness of American character through an idealized and nostalgic vision of America in which the “wilderness appealed to men as a fair, blank page on which to write a new chapter in the story of man’s struggle for a higher type of society” (2, 22, 261). The conceptual terrain of American democracy, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri observe, hinged on the fantasy of open space inhabited by “people in exodus” who continuously moved westward into unexplored territory (168). The openness of the West, which was rendered possible through a willful blindness of the existence of the Native Americans,

made it possible to imagine the unexplored territories endowed by Providence as empty, leading Americans to turn away from social problems with the enticing promise of wealth and equality. The closure of the frontier thus signified the loss of a limitless fountain of American civilization, a national expansionist identity “uniquely marked by social, economic, and spatial openness” (Stephanson 28). As a theoretical and historical version of John O’Sullivan’s well-known 1845 doctrine of Manifest Destiny, which proclaimed America’s mission to overspread the continent allotted by Providence, Turner’s thesis alerted the public to the danger threatening American civilization and emphasized the need for another frontier, expressing a fear of the then officially declared exhaustion of the frontier.

What further intensified turn-of-the century Americans’ fear of the diminishing “blank page” was the mass influx of “new” immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and from Asia, particularly, China that began in the mid-nineteenth century. Unlike earlier waves of immigrants from the British Isles and northern Europe, who were easily assimilated into mainstream American society, these “new” immigrants were considered aliens ineligible to be American citizens due to their heterogeneous religions, customs, and languages. For Americans living in a closed continent that no longer had open spaces for the newcomers and where “the spatial displacement of conflicts” was therefore no longer possible, the inflow of immigrant workers and the possibility of mixing with them were immediate causes of anxiety over the loss of American national character (Hardt & Negri 173).

Faced with competition for a livelihood with newly arrived immigrants whose willingness to work for lower wages under poor working conditions was thought to invite industrial wage slavery, poor, less educated, native-born American workers believed their standard of living would decline and objected to the perpetuation of heterogeneous religions, customs, and languages as a part of American life. Particularly, immigrants' poverty-stricken, intemperate, and unhygienic lifestyle and, in the case of Asian immigrants, ignorance of Western medicine shaped Anglo-Saxon nativism in this period into what Alan Kraut describes as a "medicalized nativism" that stigmatized certain immigrants as potential carriers and distributors of pathogenic germs (3).⁷ Communicable disease epidemics bred by the squalor of tenements were associated with particular immigrant groups. For example, the Irish in New York were wrongly blamed for the cholera epidemic of 1832, and the outbreaks of smallpox in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s and of a bubonic plague in the 1900s produced anti-Chinese bias. The 1892 typhus and cholera quarantines justified anti-Semitism, inequitably targeted Eastern European Jews, and the 1916 polio epidemic was, similarly, believed to have originated from Italians (Wald, *Contagious* 115; Humphrey 852).

The strangers' supposed hereditary tendency to contract a certain disease, a belief founded on the confusion between contagious disease and hereditary disease, not only impugned the already despised populations, but also amplified the fear of infection and racial degeneration. It provided momentum for the large-scale public health

⁷ For a discussion of the Anglo-Saxon nativism that had begun to revive and would continue to grow in early twentieth century, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* 158-75.

movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which, led by public-spirited physicians, sanitarians, engineers, nurses, and philanthropic groups who saw a moral and biological threat in crowded tenement houses, filthy streets, insufficient sewerage, and improper light, ventilation, and food, served to establish health departments and sanitary laws. Such belief indeed helped legitimate legal responses to racial biases, provoking the confluence of biological and juridical-political norms. The various acts and bills enacted in this period by which the federal government claimed the power to regulate both the number of immigrants and their countries of origin testifies to the threatening forces, economically, morally, and pathologically, of “new” immigrants.⁸

Constituting an essential part of the urban modernity that assailed late-nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon Americans’ senses, the aforementioned geo-demographic and socio-economic/cultural changes worked to give rise to the symptoms of neurasthenia. The discourse of neurasthenia, a dis-ease characterized by life in a city “contaminated” by pernicious foreign influences, was a pathological manifestation of the American “neurotic anxiety” about the diminishing frontier and racial otherness, as well as the “American” identities and autonomous selfhood.

Sharing similar symptoms with neurasthenia, hysteria also worked to draw a boundary not only between legitimate, native-born white Americans and the people they

⁸ Among these acts and bills, the National Origins Act, part of the John-Reed Immigration Act, passed in 1924 markedly limited the number of immigrants to no more than 161,000 a year. Particularly by allotting a quota to each European nation based on two percent of the number of people from that country listed in the U.S. census of 1890, in which “old” western European countries of origin predominated, this act restricted the influx of the ‘new’ immigrants and thus modified the composition of immigrants (Daniels 133-43). For a further account of the National Origins Act, see the second chapter of Desmond King’s *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy*.

saw as inferior outsiders but also between men and women. While industrial development in the mid to late nineteenth century, separating work from residence, thrust men out into the world of business, women were not allowed to leave kitchen and nursery—the female domestic sphere strictly specified by the unnatural separation of the sexes rooted in the Victorian gender ideology—in which they were carrying out their (re)productive work of pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing. Spending less and less time in domestic labor, however, many middle-class American girls became ill-prepared to assume the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood and resisted walking in their mothers' footsteps into the Ideal Mother, a strong, self-reliant, and efficient caretaker of the home. The emergence of the women's college in the 1870s and 1880s enabled young daughters to see in higher education an opportunity for professional and intellectual fulfillment and for social and sexual autonomy outside the patriarchal family. As a consequence, between the 1890s and the First World War, the New Women, daughters and granddaughters of American Victorian women in the home, or at best in women's clubs like YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association), and the WCTU (Woman's Christian Temperance Union), entered the stage of American life, making a claim for female power and sexuality. For turn-of-the-century traditional-minded men, these New Women were more a sexually, politically charged metaphor, if not metonymy, for social disorder and protests and sexual transgression, which constituted another important object of American "neurotic anxiety" about the loss of white male dominance and privilege.

Hence, mid to late nineteenth-century American medical and psychological wisdom invented the etiology and symptoms of hysteria, a disease alleged to affect only white middle-class American women, particularly those who were aspiring to professional independence and sexual freedom. Crystallizing the cultural values and gender relationships of a Victorian patriarchal culture anxious about its rebellious daughters, hysteria functioned as a pathologic sign of women's emotional sensitivity and instability, limited intellectual capacity, and unregulated sexual desire.⁹ It was less a mental disease than a convenient diagnostic box for threatening an educated unconventional women to observe the norms of feminine conduct. Medical treatment of hysteria in women was therefore, in fact, a punishment. In her short story "The Yellow Wall-paper," Charlotte Perkins Gilman described the widespread use of the rest cure as a remedy for hysteria in late nineteenth century America and its inefficiency and cruelty.¹⁰ The inventor of the rest cure, S. Weir Mitchell, once called a hysterical woman, to quote Oliver Wendell Holmes's expression, "a vampire who sucks the blood of the healthy people about her" in his book *Fat and Blood: An Essay on the Treatment of Certain Forms of Neurasthenia and Hysteria* (49). It is, therefore, no wonder that Foucault, in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, delineates "a hysterization of women's bodies" as one of four strategies that formulated the late nineteenth-century discourse of sexuality, and as the one that provided the greatest instrumentality to power relations

⁹ See, among others, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*.

¹⁰ For the cases of educated neurasthenic women including Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Edith Wharton, see Tom Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903* 221-43.

(103-14).¹¹ The idea of hysteria as white women's malady functioned as a mark both of whites' racial superiority (as in the case of neurasthenia) to "new" immigrants and African Americans (whose brains were not developed enough to feel the exhaustion of emotional and mental resources), and of women's intellectual inferiority to the opposite sex of their own race. That is, the medical discourse of hysteria, along with the discourse of neurasthenia, hinged on masculine anxiety, and served to express white male fears about the breakdown of familiar social, racial and sexual hierarchies.

American white male uneasiness—or dis-ease—about barbarous, unhygienic, and prolific immigrants and African Americans and unruly white women were in part tied to the decline of the American pastoral ideal and the spatial limits caused by the closure of the frontier, which symptomatically signifies the crisis of American masculinity. It is, therefore, understandable that U.S. expansion of imperial space from the 1890s through the early twentieth century was considered a solution to these widespread discontents.¹² Richard W. Van Alstyne considers Turner's "end of the

¹¹ Foucault proposed a hysterization of women's bodies, along with a pedagogization of children's sex, a socialization of procreative behavior, and a psychiatrization of perverse pleasure, as the "great strategic unities which, beginning in the eighteenth century, formed specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex" (*History* 103). He defined the hysterization of women's bodies as,

a threefold process whereby the feminine body was analyzed—qualified and disqualified—as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality; whereby it was integrated into the sphere of medical practices, by reason of a pathology intrinsic to it; whereby, finally, it was placed in organic communication with the social body (whose regulated fecundity it was supposed to ensure), the family space (of which it had to be a substantial and functional element), and the life of children (which it produced and had to guarantee, by virtue of a biological-moral responsibility lasting through the entire period of the children's education): the Mother, with her negative image of "nervous woman," constituted the most visible form of this hysterization. (*History* 104)

¹² See Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the*

frontier” thesis as an expression not only of ostensible American spatial anxiety but also of “parochial nationalism,” but U.S. overseas expansion was, above all, a nationalist project based on the romanticization of the frontier as the root of American civilization (101). Claiming the primacy of national citizenship over state citizenship as proclaimed in the first section of the Fourteenth Amendment, late-nineteenth-century Republican administrations repudiated the Federalist ideal of a decentralized republic which limited the rights of national government and evoked a strong sense of national identity among contemporary Americans.¹³ The Republican assertion of a more nationalistic Union thus opened what Bruce Ackerman calls “the Middle Republic,” a regime defined by a government-led ideological shift into nationalism, which foreshadowed American ascendancy to global power in the early twentieth century (81-104).¹⁴ Indeed, “American anxiety about the closed West” in this period, Amy Kaplan explains, “had global dimensions that express a fear of belatedness on the imperial stage” compared to the European nations (668).

Given that a retreat to nature and wilderness, to a place where patients could restore their exhausted nerve force, was recommended by physicians in the treatment of

United States, 1880-1917.

¹³ The first section of the Fourteenth Amendment reads: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside” (qtd. in Ackerman 65). As a constitutional part of the Republicans’ Reconstruction project enacted to protect the right of all citizens including ex-slaves against violation by their own state governments, particularly the former Confederate states, the Amendment of 1868 prefigures a new nationalistic foundation on which succeeding Republican administrations rested.

¹⁴ Following Ackerman’s constitutional periodization, Hardt and Negri call this period “the second phase of U.S. Constitution,” in which Theodore Roosevelt’s traditional imperialistic ideology and Woodrow Wilson’s “internationalist ideology of peace as an expansion of the constitutional conception of network power” re-founded a nation into an empire (174).

effeminate neurasthenic men, the frontier was thought of as the fountain of American masculinity. In this sense, U.S. imperial expansion of this period was figured as a national medical project that sought to rejuvenate withered American masculinity. It means that the Spanish-American War and America's acquisition of the overseas colonies of Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines may have been an expression of turn-of-the-century masculine definitions of manhood and of a crisis of American masculinity.¹⁵

If U.S. imperial expansion was a potential cure for a diseased masculinity, it was also understood as a preventive medical measure to pre-empt possible risk and threats from foreign enemies/pollutants and thereby to safeguard the physical and moral health of Americans. More specifically, it was a form of medical warfare against the "foreign" bacteria of race/ethnicity-specific communicable diseases, which, imported and spread by immigrants, contaminated American bodies, souls, and soils. In this perspective, the 1900-1904 San Francisco bubonic plague, as will be discussed in further detail in Chapter IV, was a significant medico-political event through which white Americans articulated their heightened racist, nativist, and imperialist impulses in the form of pathological fear of an infectious disease. Just as the terrorist attacks on September 11,

¹⁵ In the article, "Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s," Kaplan argues that American historical novels published in the last decade of the nineteenth century enacted a fictional new frontier, which not only foreshadows American ascendancy to global power in the early twentieth century but also represents the place of rejuvenation where a chivalric "white" warrior regains his masculinity among the feminized welcoming natives. Reclaiming the closed West and American masculinity through the course of overseas empire, according to Kaplan, these historical romances worked both as a national romance and masculine romance that envisions empire as the site for recuperating American ideals/manhood.

2001 taught Americans a hard lesson that their lands were not exempt from the attack of foreign enemies, the San Francisco bubonic plague had infused them with a fear that any communicable disease that developed in immigrant tenements (in this case, Chinatown) might spread quickly to the entire Caucasian population. Hence, the fight against bubonic plague in San Francisco was not just about killing germs, or curing illness, but about safeguarding and immunizing American soil contaminated by foreigners who “breed and engender disease wherever they reside” (McClain 453). The biological fear based on the racialized framing of the plague helped to shape American’s sentiment on the country’s ideological shift into a European-style imperialism of conquest and possession, which debunked American democratic ideals of non-aggression, self-determination, and non-intervention. Just as the events of 9/11 provided American power with a convenient excuse to conduct wars against alleged terrorists at home and abroad, the fear of contagion caused by the plague, in a way, led America to compete in the race for colonies as a preventive measure for protecting the native soil. The experience of the bubonic plague in San Francisco paved the way for the development of a “tropical medicine” that aimed to immunize the bodies of American colonizers from the attack of lethal bacteria in the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, and the Caribbean islands.

The medical discourses of neurasthenia, hysteria, and bubonic plague reflected late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century white Anglo-Saxon men’s belief in, as well as anxiety over, American values bolstered by their cultural, racial, and sexual superiority and consolidated through a conjunction of medicine and politics. Channeled with the medical knowledge of psychopathology, neurology, bacteriology, and

immunology, American men's racial, sexual, and spatial anxieties functioned to act out their racist, misogynist, nativist, and imperialist impulses and police the boundary of their privileged realm. The three diseases and their underlying fears dramatized national performances of racial and sexual difference and worked to legitimize exclusionary political techniques and aggressive imperial diplomacy. It should be noted that these pathologic fears also served to maintain early to mid twentieth- century biopolitical control, which wielded its influence over the population within and outside the United States by intervening in their health and welfare.

Bellamy's *Looking Backward 2000-1887*, Stein's "Melantha: Each One As She May," and Lewis's *Arrowsmith* employ the contemporary medical discourse of neurasthenia, hysteria, and bubonic plague, respectively, in varying degrees, to provoke the development of characters, plots, or themes of the stories. Bellamy begins his utopian novel by depicting the hero Julian West's insomnia and mesmeric practice which cause him to fall in a long sleep of more than a century and find himself awakened in the utopia of 2000. In "Melantha," Stein portrays the heroine of the story, Melantha Herbert, as a black hysterical woman. Lewis's *Arrowsmith* reaches a climax when the young bacteriologist, Martin Arrowsmith, undertakes a medical expedition to a Caribbean island infested with bubonic plague.

Given that the authors I consider in this study were familiar with contemporary medical theories and practices in varying circumstances, the pivotal role that the three diseases play in their works is not surprising. Bellamy was a life-long sufferer of nervous disorder and chronic dyspepsia that eventually caused his death prematurely at the age of

forty-eight. Stein spent most of her twenties in the Harvard Annex and Johns Hopkins Medical School, paying special attention to psychology and nervous diseases of woman, before leaving Johns Hopkins prematurely without a degree and settling down in Paris to begin her literary career. Born to a father who practiced medicine in a small town in Minnesota (his elder brother was also a physician), Lewis grew up watching the medical practices of a country doctor and, deeply respecting his father, longed to write a doctor-hero novel which turned out to be *Arrowsmith*. Since the medical theories and practices of their time were often tied to political and cultural discourses imbued with racial and sexual prejudices, the three writers' familiarity with contemporary medical theories and practices presupposes their awareness of controversial social and political issues of the society.¹⁶ Seeing the three authors' knowledge of and perspective on contemporary medicine and science, therefore, as a key to understanding their complicated attitude toward race and sex, this dissertation aims to explore the ways in which neurasthenia, hysteria, and bubonic plague worked both as a metaphor for American fears of heterogeneity and as a regenerative device that makes white American ideals and values more dynamic and resilient in their stories.¹⁷ I examine the dynamics of fear whereby

¹⁶ For the political and cultural aspect of a scientific theory, see Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*; Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*.

¹⁷ Unlike Bellamy and Lewis, who were white, old-stock American, middle-class men, Stein was a second-generation German-Jewish American lesbian/woman. Hence my claim that Stein's short story, reflecting white male anxiety, acknowledged the Anglo-Saxon American male value system may sound contradictory. Yet, as will be discussed in Chapter III, the ways she ventriloquizes the voice of racism and misogyny in "Melantha" by appropriating the medical discourse of hysteria tellingly show the power and danger of racial and sexual ideologies colored by pseudo-scientific discourses, which lead one to betray his or her own identity.

Bellamy, Stein, and Lewis adopt diverse modes of “flight and isolation” and “relation and union.”

In Chapter II, “The Pathology of Utopia,” I argue that Bellamy’s *Looking Backward 2000-1887* represents a utopian politics of misplaced nostalgia that imagines an ethnocentric Anglo-Saxon society that buttresses American nativist and expansionist ideals. Suggesting that the mental and physical health of inhabitants is a prerequisite to the establishment of utopia, Bellamy portrays the future city of Boston as a hygienic place where the dangers of infection and nerve-distracting stimuli no longer exist, and where the protagonist, Julian West, no longer suffers from insomnia and other distressing neurasthenic symptoms that afflicted him in the late nineteenth century. The etiology and diagnosis of neurasthenia not only provide guidance to the social, political, architectural, and technological structure of utopia, but also qualify the alleged patients of the disease, Anglo-Saxon Americans, for exclusive citizenship in utopia. Re-enacting the American nostalgia for the vanishing frontier, the sterilized utopia in *Looking Backward* works as a metaphor for American anxiety about increasing racial heterogeneity, as the utopia is depicted as populated only by race-less and class-less workers, devoid of any traces of their racial identity—that is, as the locus of utopian “relation and union” built on the simple rule of homogeneity.

Reading Stein’s “Melanctha” as a clinical record of hysteria, Chapter III, “A Case History of a Mulatto Hysteric,” shows that the author creates the namesake heroine as an hysteric mulatto woman by focusing on the four symptoms and etiologies of hysteria: wandering mind, traumatic sexual experiences, histrionic personality, and

homosexuality. Examining the racism and misogyny inherent in the medical theories of hysteria expounded by Jean-Martin Charcot and Freud, I will demonstrate the ways in which Stein employs and manipulates representative prejudices of her time in the portrayal of the hysteric Melanctha. My chapter then explores nineteenth-century biological links between blackness, Jewishness, and homosexuality, the trinity of “difference” established by this period’s pseudo-scientific discourses of psychopathology and physiognomy. Illustrating how the aesthetic experimentation of “Melanctha” grows out of Stein’s concerns about her racial and sexual marginality shaped in part through her training in medicine and psychology, I offer a context in which the hysteric Melanctha may be read as a character the Jewish-American lesbian writer created to conceal and embody her racial self-hatred, a problematic phenomenon exhibiting the productive power of fear.

Chapters II and III explore the subordination of psychiatry to contemporary political ideology, which worked together to maintain the racial and sexual order of late nineteenth-century American society. In Chapter IV, “The Immunity of Empire,” I expand the focus to the collusion between racial politics and modern medicine in general and discuss how the knowledge of bacteriology and immunology formulated a “tropical medicine,” which worked to legitimize the U.S. foray into empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, serving the idea of “the dissemination of civilization” in the name of disseminating immunity. I begin my fourth chapter with a discussion of how changes in the theory of disease and infection in the 1870s-1880s, specifically the change from the miasma theory to the germ theory, shifting the focus on the vehicle of

infection away from place to human, provided momentum for the state to wield medico-political power on people by scrutinizing, controlling, and quarantining them. It suggests that even diseases with visible symptoms and pains are, as in the case of mental disorders like neurasthenia and hysteria, susceptible to an imaginative diagnosis and treatment founded on a physician's (or a culture's) racial and sexual prejudices. From this perspective, I read Lewis's *Arrowsmith* as a colonial text, considering Arrowsmith's bubonic plague expedition to the Caribbean as less a random episode and more a culmination of the American imperial project hinged on the pathologization of the bodies of the colonized. *Arrowsmith* portrays the ways in which a "tropical medicine" disguises itself as a philanthropic, idealistic, and scientific inquiry that transcends the ugly politics of racism and imperialism and reproduces a pseudo-scientific discourse of racism that consolidated the alleged biological superiority of white colonizers. Seeking to secure the immunity of empire from an attack of communicable disease, equated with pernicious immigrants and colonial natives conceived, ironically, as invaders, an American colonial doctor and scientist served as an emissary of empire to the tropical colonies, at the same time laying the groundwork of biopolitical control of twentieth-century American populations.

The problematic nature of the three literary works I consider derives in part from the complicated, sophisticated, and involving portrayals of diseases like neurasthenia, hysteria, and bubonic plague through which they articulate the principal anxieties of the age that plagued the white male American subject. In the pages that follow, I explore how the medical discourse of these diseases and the fictions that engage these diseases

utilized the productive power of pathological fear in order to ventriloquize the American dis-eases over racial, ethnic, and sexual difference.

CHAPTER II
THE PATHOLOGY OF UTOPIA:
NEURASTHENIA, NATIVISM, AND FRONTIER IN EDWARD BELLAMY'S
LOOKING BACKWARD 2000-1887

From April 29 to November 11, 1893 the Boston Magnetic Company ran an advertisement for their magnetic pain reliever in *The New Nation*, a weekly newspaper edited and published by Edward Bellamy.

Wonderful Discovery!! Dr. Ransophier's Electric Magnetic Appliance.
An instant relief for all pain. Can be applied to any part of the person easily; never gets out of order. Stops headache in 2 minutes, relieves nervousness and produces sleep, stops neuralgic pains; relieves Rheumatism. Heart troubles, Sciatica, Kidney, Bladder and Liver ailments, can be helped or cured by this Magnetic appliance. Quickens blood, renews Vigor far more effectively than any medecine [sic] to be taken internally; indorsed [sic] by eminent physicians. (See figure 1)

The New Nation devoted most of its pages, as Bellamy wrote in the letter to Thomas Wentworth Higgins on December 20, 1890, to the "discussion of the industrial and social situation from the moral and economic point of view" indicated by his reform program in *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (qtd. in Bowman 130). The newspaper paid special attention to the selection of advertisements, explicitly stipulating in the front pages of most issues that it "reserves the right to reject advertising arrangements entered

into by agent, if, in its opinions, their appearance is not suitable and proper.”

Considering that Bellamy criticized the flood of advertisements in *Looking Backward*, casting them as the representative “waste” of the American Gilded Age generated by excessive competition, consumption, and the corruption of financial capital, a strict policy on advertisement was natural for *The New Nation* (LB 229).¹



Wonderful Discovery!!

Dr. Ransophier's Electric Magnetic Appliance. An instant relief for all pain. Can be applied to any part of the person easily; never gets out of order. Stops headache in 2 minutes, relieves nervousness and produces sleep, stops neuralgic pains; relieves Rheumatism. Heart troubles, Sciatica, Kidney, Bladder and Liver ailments, can be helped or cured by this Magnetic appliance. Quickens blood, renews Vigor far more effectively than any medicine to be taken internally; indorsed by eminent physicians. Sent to any part of the United States on receipt of price, \$2.00

Descriptive circular and agents' terms sent on application, Address,

BOSTON MAGNETIC CO., 19 West Street, Boston.

Figure 1. Advertisement for Dr. Ransophier's Electric Magnetic Appliance, *The New Nation*, Vol. III (1893).

¹ All page numbers preceded by *LB* are from Bellamy's *Looking Backward* 2000-1887.

He selectively admitted advertisements which were “suitable and proper” to the opinions of the newspaper and, therefore, it is tempting to argue that advertisements in the newspaper correspond to, if not represent, the gist of Bellamy’s utopian ideas.²

A glimpse at randomly-picked advertisement pages of *The New Nation*, for example, in the issue published on July 8, 1893, would validate this claim.³ The last two pages of this issue include, to name a few, advertisements for a train ticket to the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a low-priced typewriter, “the Climax Solar-water Heater” that boils water utilizing the sun’s heat, a refrigerator, and Buffalo gluten feed for milk cows. Leaving the common ground of the underlying racial ideology of

² Julian West, the hero of *Looking Backward*, is struck by “the walls of the buildings, the windows, the broadsides of the newspapers in every hand, the very pavements, everything in fact in sight, save the sky, [which] were covered with the appeals of individuals who sought, under innumerable pretexts, to attract the contributions of others to their support” (LB 229). In a store where clerks “induc[e] the customers to buy, buy, buy ... what they wanted not, more than they wanted, what they could not afford” he finds “the sheerest waste to force upon people what they did not want” (LB 231), dubbing them a “horrible babel of shameless self-assertion and mutual depreciation,” a “stunning clamor of conflicting boasts, appeals, and adjurations,” and a “stupendous system of brazen beggary” (LB 229). Accordingly, “[N]o personal advertising” exists in Bellamy’s utopian city of 2000 (LB 229). Indeed, one contemporary socialist newspaper, *The Coming Nation*, which, according to its motto appearing over the paper’s masthead, favored “a government of, by, and for the people, as outlined in Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*,” did not insert any advertising in its pages, although it is not clear whether this policy was influenced by Bellamy’s critical view on it. The editor and publisher of *The Coming Nation*, Julius August Wayland, wrote in his editorial of December 23, 1893 that his newspaper “has not asked a cent of patronage” (qtd. in Quint 189). He reiterated the above motto also in the advertisement for his newspaper printed in *The New Nation*, sternly announcing at the end, “No Advertising Admitted.” For a detailed account of the newspaper *The Coming Nation*, its editor Julius August Wayland, better known to the faithful readers as “J. A. Wayland, The One Hoss Editor,” and his influence on grass roots socialism at the end of the nineteenth century, see Howard H. Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement* 175-94. Yet, a no-ad policy was far from an option for Bellamy since he supported *The New Nation* from his own resources from the beginning when its first issue was released in January 1891, and the financial quandary the newspaper had wallowed in for three years was one of the primary reasons for the discontinuance of the newspaper on February 1894 (Morgan 66-67).

³ *The New Nation* 3.27 (July 1893) 11.

Looking Backward and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition aside, the majestic but traditional and familiar buildings in Bellamy's utopian city, as Joseph J. Corn and Brian Horrigan note, have "often been seen as a prescient anticipation of the elegance and order" of the architecture of the White City at the Colombian Exposition (36). The next three items, including the first, suggest both the readership of *Looking Backward* and *The New Nation* and their utilitarian footing. Principal readers of the novel and subscribers to the newspaper were educated, middle-class professional men, such as lawyers, journalists, writers, clergymen, and doctors, who held a favorable view of Bellamy's utopian doctrine and saw modern technology as a tool to improve living conditions. Farmers in the Populist party, who felt victimized by capitalism, were also readers of *Looking Backward* and *The New Nation*, and this explains the fourth item, a gluten feed for cows.

Likewise, Dr. Ransophier's Electric Magnetic Appliance, a portable medical device, as advertised above, claiming to cure or treat most disease, suggests that *Looking Backward* and its utopian ideals were closely intertwined with nerve ailments and pain in general. The magnetic pain reliever was designed to restore equilibrium to the supply of the cosmic essence called animal magnetism, an invisible energy or fluid evenly distributed throughout the healthy human body. It was a high-end model through which the patient could practice a sort of mesmerism by himself or herself without being mesmerized, so that the editor of *The Western Druggist* invited the attention of the readers, mostly retail pharmacists, to the advertisement for this device printed also in its

page, announcing that the Boston Magnetic Company has “a specialty which is worthy your investigation.”⁴

Mesmerism, developed by German physician Franz Anton Mesmer and further by his disciple Marquis de Puységur, who endowed it with a scientific significance in the 1770s, billed itself as a way to experience a deeper state of consciousness and a truly effective mode of healing. As Robert Fuller maintains in *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls*, mesmerism entered American cultural thought in the early nineteenth century—in the wake of the Second Great Awakening which reached its peak about 1830—and quickly gathered immense popularity, appealing particularly to religious leaders who needed a feat of physic power in their competition for converts, in contrast to the European fascination with it as a passing fad of an idle upper class (1-15). The American fascination with mesmerism was a symptom of rapid social change brought by urbanization, industrialization, and scientific discoveries, which deprived people of their belief in individual independence and a unified perspective toward the world. The thirty years immediately following the Civil War saw almost every urban center in the Northeast triple in size, and immigrants who headed straight for the city in the latter half of the century further transformed the city into a grab bag of divergent people, thrusting American culture onto untested ground lacking in social homogeneity. Moreover, individuals were no longer able to directly control their material destinies. A simple philosophy of individualism based on the Protestant work ethic became a poor orientation to a new industrial society that failed to insure a correspondence between

⁴ *The Western Druggist* 15.6 (June 1893) 40.

individual sincerity and social reward. Religion lost much of its suasive power as, by the 1860s, Protestant churches and their revivalism, the product of a rural, middle class society, lacked the social resources to effectively carry out their role in neighborhoods composed of distinct ethnic or economic groups. Addressing newly emerging intellectual and emotional demand for a new and more satisfying worldview, mesmerism attracted a wide assortment of religious sects and utopian social movements which needed a cure for anxious American souls.⁵

A series of spiritualist séances in the Red Room of the White House between 1863 and 1865, conducted by Mary Todd Lincoln (and attended by her husband Abraham Lincoln) who was consumed by grief over the loss of their son Willie, left a lingering impression on Americans, generating a widespread interest in communication with the dead and spiritual mesmerism in general, as this event was publicized by Nettie Colburn Maynard, a trance medium who provided a first-hand account of it in 1891.⁶

Toward the mid and late nineteenth century mesmerists even entered the realm of

⁵ Mesmerism promoted both personal and cultural renewal, according to the cultural anthropologist Anthony Wallace, by producing a prophet who (1) had undergone an ecstatic revelation; (2) successfully formulated this insight concerning human salvation into a practical code; (3) developed ritualized means to communicate his insights or code to others; (4) established an organization to disseminate this new philosophy of life on a widespread basis; and finally (5) provided individuals with experiences through which they might learn, appropriate, and put this new code into practice. (qtd. in Fuller 118)

Diverse religious leaders in this period, without doubt, claimed to be prophets. For a contemporary account on the background and origin of mesmerism and spiritualism, see the creator of Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle's two-volume, *The History of Spiritualism* (1926). Useful secondary sources that examine the cultural significance of mesmerism in American society include Alan Gauld's *The Founders of Psychical Research and A History of Hypnotism*; and R. Laurence Moore's *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*.

⁶ See Nettie Colburn Maynard, *Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist? Or, Curious Revelations from the Life of a Trance Medium* 95-162.

showmanship. As Fred Nadis demonstrates in *Wonder Shows: Performing Science, Magic, and Religion in America*, stupendous feats of supernatural wonders, such as mind-reading, clairvoyance, hypnotism, séance, athanasia, and precognition, became famous stage magic shows that attracted numerous audiences to theaters.

Intrigued by the era's strong public interest in mesmerism, spiritualism, theosophism, Christian Scientism, and New Thought movements, which claimed to bring people to spiritual and physical salvation by cultivating psychic powers residing in the "god-self" within, Bellamy utilized these psychic wonders as a crucial device in the plot development of his works (Tumber 611; Bowman 148-51). His bizarre novelistic romance *Miss Ludington's Sister* (1884) is a story about an aged spinster, Miss Ludington, who falls in love with her youthful self in the portrait and meets "herself" through a séance, which turns out to be a fake in the end. Such short stories as "To Whom This May Come" and "The Blindman's World" picture a race of people who communicate with each other through a form of mind-reading that replaces speech, and Martians who possess foresight, respectively.⁷ Likewise, *Looking Backward* portrays a young well-to-do and settled Bostonian, Julian West, whose mesmeric sleep lasts 113 years before he wakes up in the utopian city of the year 2000 and is immediately cared for by Dr. Leete and his wife, and by his daughter. The fact that West's insomnia calls for the self-proclaimed "Professor of Animal Magnetism," Dr. Pillsbury's mesmeric practice as a remedy that consequently triggers the deployment of utopia attests to

⁷ These short stories, along with another twelve, were posthumously assembled and published as *The Blindman's World and Other Stories* in 1898, one year after Bellamy's death, with a foreword by William Dean Howells, who highly praised Bellamy for his rich romantic imagination "surpassed only by that of Hawthorne" (xiii).

Bellamy's pathological understanding of the age's widespread discontent. Moreover, given that West's insomnia was one of the supposed symptom of neurasthenia, we can also read *Looking Backward* through the lens of the racial politics of this representative late nineteenth-century American disease.

1. Hygiene and Health: A Utopia without Insomnia

Utopian socialist writings before *Looking Backward*, such as Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879) and Laurence Gronlund's *The Cooperative Commonwealth* (1884), had a limited readership of educated, property-less, professional men. Bellamy therefore decided to sugarcoat his radical vision of industrial reorganization with a story of utopian romance which "command[s] greater popular attention than others," such as sermons, essays, or philosophical treatises, because "all the world is a good critic of a story" ("How I Wrote" 223-24). He was right. *Looking Backward* became the third-largest bestseller of its time, after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880), selling over a million copies in America and England within a decade after first being published in January 1888. The phenomenal popularity of the novel provoked a tremendous outpouring of utopian literature. Sequels, parodies, satires, and skeptical dystopian responses that employed settings, characters, and plots similar to *Looking Backward* created, as Justin Nordstrom examines, fictional dialogues that portrayed controversial sociopolitical issues of the Gilded Age of the United States, such as poverty, education, capitalism, immigration, socialism, and so on.⁸ "What *Uncle*

⁸ Many utopian fictions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were extensively

Tom's Cabin was to the anti-slavery movement,” wrote John Dewey, “Bellamy’s book may well be to the shaping of popular opinion for a new social order” (106).

The success of the novel lies, without doubt, in the author’s insight into the social injustice and anxiety of the age, as impressively illustrated by the parable of the coach “which the masses of humanity were harnessed to and dragged toilsomely along a very hilly and sandy road” (LB 48-49):

The driver was hunger, and permitted no lagging, though the pace was necessarily very slow. Despite the difficulty of drawing the coach at all along so hard a road, the top was covered with passengers who never got down, even at the steepest ascents. These seats on top were very breeze and comfortable. Well up out of the dust, their occupants could enjoy the scenery at their leisure, or critically discuss the merits of the straining team. (LB 49)

influenced by *Looking Backward*: to name a few titles, Richard C. Michaelis’s *Looking Further Forward: An Answer to “Looking Backward”* by Edward Bellamy (1890), W. W. Satterlee’s *Looking Backward and What I Saw* (1890), J. W. Roberts’s *Looking Within: The Misleading Tendencies of “Looking Backward” Made Manifest* (1893), William Dean Howells’s *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), and, across the Atlantic, William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* (1890), and H. G. Wells’s *A Modern Utopia* (1905). Bellamy’s novel also inspired thirteen magazines including *The Nationalist*, which boasted a circulation of 69,000 in 1889 (Roemer 2). Allyn B. Forbes’s article, “The Literary Quest for Utopia, 1880-1900,” provides a list of forty nine utopian novels published between 1884 and 1990 at the end of his paper, and Robert Schurter’s *The Utopian Novel in America, 1865-1900* gives an expanded list, adding 14 such works published between 1865 and 1887. Kenneth M. Roemer surveys 160 utopian works that appeared between 1888 and 1900 in *The Obsolete Necessity: American Utopian Writings, 1888-1900*, and Jean Pfaelzer’s *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896: The Politics of Form* (1984) contains an eight-page full bibliography of American utopian fiction released in the 1880s and 1890s, which is more immensely valuable than the predecessors.

The caricature of greedy capitalists who, enjoying salubrious air on the top deck, exploited the labor of the poor workers on the bottom poignantly describes the social misery of a world built on inequality. Bellamy's gloomy yet penetrating portrait of social inequality in *Looking Backward* would not have been so appealing, however, if he had not paid attention to unhygienic and pathological conditions of people in distress. When, toward the end of the novel, West dreams of returning to the Boston of 1887, the first thing he does is to look over a morning newspaper filled with reports of crimes, such as "Misappropriation of a trust fund by executors. Orphans left penniless," "Clever system of thefts by a bank teller; \$50,000 gone," "A woman murdered in cold blood for her money at New Haven," and "A man shoots himself in Worcester because he could not get work. A large family left destitute" (LB 227). While a nearly one-page list of these incidents composes a kaleidoscopic microcosm of an American Gilded Age marred by greed and corruption, however, it is "gusts of fetid air," "the effluvia of a slave ship's between-decks," "pale babies gasping out their lives amid sultry stench," and "hopeless-faced women deformed by hardship" in the streets and alleys of the city that terrify him most and allow him a better view of the wretched condition of poverty (LB 236). In the parable of the coach, the bottom of the coach occupied by the poor is also depicted as an overcrowded, unventilated and dusty place.

As Alain Corbin demonstrates in *The Foul and the Fragrant*, the unpleasant odor of the poor proletariat constituted a stereotype in the nineteenth century. Connecting "the fetidity of the laboring classes" with "the danger of infection," the nineteenth-century bourgeois wrongly attributed the effect of poverty to the cause of poverty, and justified

“distinguish[ing] himself from the putrid masses, stinking like death, like sin,” the treatment meted out to the poor (Corbin 143). Yet, sound hygiene on the top of the coach could not guarantee the mental and physical health of bourgeois life. Their seats on the top deck “were in great demand and the competition for them was keen” (*LB* 49). “[T]he seats were very insecure, and at every sudden jolt of the coach persons were slipping out of them and falling to the ground, where they were instantly compelled to take hold of the rope and help to drag the coach on which they had before ridden so pleasantly” (*LB* 49). The fear of losing their seats thus became “a constant cloud upon the happiness of those who rode,” which always made them feel threatened, insecure and nervous (*LB* 49).

Hygiene, sanitation, and health form the core of Bellamy’s ideas of social misery and the construction of utopia—ideas that came naturally to someone who suffered from many mental and physical illnesses throughout his life, such as tuberculosis, abscessed teeth, nervous disorder, influenza, and chronic dyspepsia, and who witnessed the poor health of his long-suffering mother and the early death of his brother. For Bellamy disease was not a mere metaphor through which one can address society’s spiritual and cultural dis-ease. Rather, it was the biggest impediment to the welfare of people and the manifestation of the physical and mental decline of the nation. Diagnosing the United States pathologically as a “nervous, dyspeptic, and bilious nation,” Bellamy wrote in his journal that “a sound philosophy and a good digestion are triple brass against the ills of the world” (qtd. in Bowman 248). Without improving the living conditions of the masses, his utopia was not possible. The slums of the city had to be eradicated, diseases prevented, and the industrial smog eliminated. As the author’s persona in *Looking*

Backward and West's guide to the utopia, Dr. Leete, suggests, the abolition of "unhygienic conditions or special peril to life and limb" from a place of work makes all jobs equally attractive, allows young people to choose their vocation according to their natural tastes, and, as a consequence, works as a basis for achieving equality and development in society as a whole (*LB* 83).

Along with the poor health and unhygienic living conditions of the working class, Bellamy also considered nervous and mental diseases of the educated upper middle class as obstacles to be removed for the creation of utopia. Tapping into a widespread sense that modern life was bringing a new intensification of nervous stimulation, he characterized the pathological condition of the United States also by its neurological modernity, which indicates, according to Ben Singer, "a fundamentally different register of subjective experience, characterized by physical and perceptual shocks of the modern urban environment" (72).⁹ As Georg Simmel observed, unlike a rural life constituted by inhabitants' emotional relationships, a metropolitan life requires a specific mode of adaption, characterized by a heightened awareness and intelligence through which its dwellers maintain their psychic integrity and mental stability against the

⁹ In his essay "Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism," Singer abstracts four ideas implied by the term "modernity": first, as a moral and political concept, "the ideological shelterlessness of a postsacred, postfeudal world in which all norms and values are open to question"; second, as a cognitive concept, "the emergence of instrumental rationality as the intellectual framework through which the world is perceived and constructed"; third, as a socioeconomic concept, "an array of technological and social changes that took a shape in the last two centuries and reached a kind of critical mass near the end of the nineteenth century; and, lastly, as a "neurological concept of modernity," which might be, in a way, an offshoot of the socioeconomic conception of modernity. The seventh chapter of Nancy Bentley's *Frantic Panoramas: American Literature and Mass Culture, 1870-1920* explores a neurological concept of modernity within the American pragmatic context, particularly through the work of Henry Adams and William James.

fragmenting effects of urban modernity (410-13). Unable to adapt to the rapid tempo and sensory stimuli of city life, however, West could “not have slept in the city at all, with its never ceasing nightly noises” (*LB* 56). City noise was construed to have deleterious effects upon the brain and the nerve system, and, like fetid air and putrid water, was a menace to public health that needed to be controlled and eradicated at all costs, as the architect and writer, Philip G. Hubert, likened it to malaria and fever germs, and the pains of chronic sleep deprivation to the agony of medieval torture in his 1894 essay, “For the Suppression of City Noises”:

We have organizations for the suppression of vice, of poverty, of cruelty, the discouragement of tipping, “treating,” and other evils and pernicious habits, and why have we no society for the suppression of noise?

Noise constitutes one of the evils under which civilized man suffered much harm without recognizing the real root of the trouble, and the man of the future will protect himself against noise as he now does against malaria, fever germs, and other insidious evils that have only lately been recognized as the source of untold harm. ... The medieval torture which consisted in keeping a man awake till he died is said to have been the most horrible devised by monsters peculiarly expert at that sort of thing. I never realized its atrocity until these last few years, during which I have been robbed of sleep, peace, and happiness, comparatively speaking, by the din in which fate has cast me. (633)¹⁰

¹⁰ As if responding to Hubert’s call for “society for the suppression of noise,” Mrs. Isaac L. Rice,

Hence, crusading against city noise, albeit passively, West installs a tomb-like underground sleeping chamber where “no murmur from the upper world ever penetrated” (*LB* 56). Although his “unusually nervous state” makes him “slower than common in losing consciousness,” West also often takes a mesmeric treatment “from fear of nervous disorder” after each two sleepless nights even at the bunker (*LB* 57-58). West’s (and Hubert’s) response to city noise evidently represents the widespread awareness of and resistance to a new intensity of sensory stimulation as an etiologic agent which drained Americans of nervous energy. Given that utopia is built on a dystopian view of the present, it can thus be argued that Bellamy’s new Boston is a place simply where one can sleep without pain, and where one does not suffer from any mental and physical diseases.

The landscape of Boston in the year 2000 that West gazes out upon from a belvedere on Dr. Leete’s housetop, first of all, exposes the significance of sanitation and pathology in the creation of a utopia.

a white middle-class woman dubbed the “Queen of Silence,” founded “The Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise” thirteen years later to launch aggressive crusade against city noise. Calling Mrs. Rice’s anti-noise movement “a new crusade,” one *New York Times* article on February 5, 1907 introduced “letters from prominent citizens complaining against church bells which have proved a positive nuisance, and requesting their suppression,” and reported that she “will request the traction companies to instruct their conductors and motormen not to ring bells and gongs, the automobile clubs to ask their members not to toot their horns, and the Police Department to stop drunken brawls and noisy children’s sports near hospitals” (“Church Bells”). About a year later, Mrs. Rice even made children pledge to make as little noise as possible in the neighborhood of a hospital with the cooperation of the Board of Education. Interestingly, the inaugural president of the Society’s Children’s Hospital Branch was Mark Twain, who readily accepted Mrs. Rice’s offer by answering, “I have an abundance of sympathy for this movement. If I were younger I would like to work for it. Now, I thank you for the compliment you pay me, and shall be happy to have my name used as President of the Children’s Hospital Branch” (“Anti-Noise”).

At my feet lay a great city. Miles of broad streets, shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings, for the most part not in continuous blocks but set in larger or smaller inclosures, stretched in every direction. Every quarter contained large open squares filled with trees, among which statues glistened and fountains flashed in the late afternoon sun. Public buildings of a colossal size and an architectural grandeur unparalleled in my day raised their stately piles on every side. (*LB* 65)

Although Bellamy, a native of Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, had inherited the anti-urbanism of early pre-Civil War reformers' social experiments, and thought of the city as "pagan," a den of social injustices that ruined American culture and values, he did not fully endorse his predecessors' pastoral escapist vision (qtd. in Morgan 94).¹¹ He rather

¹¹ Many early- and mid-nineteenth century reformers who had rural or small-town backgrounds cursed the big city and never adapted to it, embodying their call for a return to rural life and agrarian values in their experimental utopias, as exemplified by the Fourieristic communities and phalanxes, the Owenist factories, the transcendentalist Brook Farm, and religious communities such as Hopedale, Oneida, and the Shakers. See Charles J. Rooney, "Post-Civil War, Pre-*Looking Backward* Utopia: 1865-87." For a contemporary narrative about the noble pre-Civil War experiments of social reorganization and their religious efforts to create American utopias, see Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States*. (Nordhoff was one of staff writers of the *New York Evening Post*, just before Bellamy worked briefly with this paper. Bellamy reviewed Nordhoff's book when it was published about four years later (Morgan 370)). Throughout his life Bellamy lived in a big city only for eight months, from November 1871 to June 1872, as a young journalist. Bellamy's stay in New York was terminated prematurely, Bowman surmised, as he held the position of editorial writer and literary editor of the *Springfield Union* on his father's advice (38-39). The oppressiveness of the city which upset his health, his spirit, and his mind, as in the case of Julian West, however, seems to be the more fundamental reason for his early return to Massachusetts (Morgan 132). Bellamy later expressed his hatred of big city life in the unpublished draft of the story "Eliot Carson" by stating through the mouth of the protagonist, "The only thing I can't understand is that ... any other man with a soul can be satisfied to live in a city of brick and stone, instead of in a country of hills, forests and brooks" (qtd. in Morgan 95). He also wrote that, as if reminiscing his path in life in a word, a man was to go to the city, find it hard to live, see a lot of suffering there, and become a Nationalist (qtd. in Bowman 39). No wonder that even when he was editing and publishing *The New Nation* in Boston he stayed at home in Chicopee Falls, spending two or three days of the week at the

sought to re-imagine the city as a venue for utopia, which, as Kenneth M. Roemer points out, “eliminate[s] the worst of the city and the country” and “enhance[s] the best of both worlds” (156). Because unhygienic, nerve-stimulating living conditions were among the worst aspects of the city for the writer, West, on his first sight of utopia, is impressed first by “the complete absence of chimneys and their smoke” (*LB* 67). It might be, as West says, one of “small things before great” changes that happened in utopia. But it is a significant improvement that succinctly reveals the environmental ethics of Bellamy’s utopia, which defines itself as a smog-free, sanitary world without any traces of darkness, dirt, stench, and germ (*LB* 67).

The landscape of utopia also describes a nerve-free space carefully designed to prevent the outbreak of urban psychological disorders. Toward the end of the nineteenth century traditional cities with small, intimate, and human-scale spaces were transformed into versions of metropolis, a space subjected to scrutiny as a possible cause of new mental illnesses. For example, some members of the metropolitan population suffered from agoraphobia (*Platzscheu*), as identified by the Viennese architect Camillo Sitte, when “they have to walk across a vast empty place” (qtd. in Vidler 26). Since “one naturally feels very cozy in small, old plazas,” according to Sitte, “on our modern gigantic plazas, with their yawning emptiness and oppressive ennui, the inhabitants of snug old town suffer attacks of this fashionable agoraphobia” (qtd. in Vidler 28). Agoraphobia is exacerbated, as Berlin psychologist Carl Otto Westphal added, by the dimensions of the space, especially when there seems to be no boundary to the visual

Boston office (Morgan 95).

field (qtd. in Vidler 28-29). A wide square or a broad street lined with continuous buildings was believed to create spatial emptiness and thus trigger agoraphobia.¹² In this sense, the broad streets “shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings ... set in larger or smaller inclosures” and “large open squares filled with trees” in utopia bestow a sense of boundaries upon its pedestrians, helping them to refrain from imagining excessive emptiness and distorting their sense of space and depth. In this way, parks and trees, along with smog-less salubrious air, represent the best of the country infiltrating the urban utopia, which is basically built on and illustrates the best of the city (“public buildings of a colossal size and an architectural grandeur”). Possibly for a similar reason, Foucault, in the preface to *The Order of Things*, pictures utopia as a combination of the city and the country that “open[s] up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy” and calls it “a fantastic, untroubled region” and a space of “consolation” (xviii).

As Dr. Leete declares that the ideal state calls for equal attention to both the mind and the body to fulfill “the highest possible physical, as well as mental, development of every one,” the health of the inhabitants was indeed a prerequisite for Bellamy’s idea of utopia (*LB* 175). Accordingly, no wonder West is struck by “the prominence given to

¹² Quite naturally as a time-traveler, West suffers from an identity crisis in his second night at Boston in the year 2000. It is interesting that its symptoms were very similar to those of agoraphobia:

There are no words for the mental torture I endured during this helpless, eyeless groping for myself in a boundless void. No other experience of the mind gives probably anything like the sense of absolute intellectual arrest from the loss of a mental fulcrum, a starting point of thought, which comes during such a momentary obscuration of the sense of one’s identity. (*LB* 88-89)

physical culture” and “the magnificent health of the young people” in utopia, which starkly contrasts with his contemporaries’ frail bodies and spirits (*LB* 176):

My previous observations, not only of the notable personal endowments of the family of my host, but of the people I had seen in my walks abroad, had already suggested the idea that there must have been something like a general improvement in the physical standard of the race since my day, and now, as I compared these stalwart young men and fresh, vigorous maidens with the young people I had seen in the schools of the nineteenth century, I was moved to impart my thought to Dr. Leete. (*LB* 176)

Even when describing the beauty of Edith, the daughter of Dr. Leete and West’s utopian bride-to-be who turns out later to be the great-granddaughter of his nineteenth-century fiancée Edith Bartlett, West takes notice of her physical health that women of his time commonly lacked: “Feminine softness and delicacy were in this lovely creature deliciously combined with an appearance of health and abounding physical vitality too often lacking in the maidens with whom alone I could compare her” (*LB* 68).

Accordingly, it is not a sheer coincidence that West’s guide to utopia is played by Dr. Leete, a physician, who regards the visitor from the past as “[his] patient as well as [his] guest” (*LB* 87).

Quite naturally, West has no sooner arrived in utopia, a place that cares for the health of its inhabitants, than he recovers from insomnia, the representative symptom of modern nerve ailments, such as agoraphobia and, as will be discussed below in detail, neurasthenia. On his first night in the Boston of 2000 his fear of insomnia grows worse

after having a glimpse of “the horror of strangeness [of utopia] that was waiting to be faced” (*LB* 71). Dr. Leete gives him “a dose which would insure ... a sound night’s sleep without fail,” and the next morning West awakens refreshed “with the feeling of an old citizen” (*LB* 71). The novel repeats these scenes. On the following night West is given “a wineglass of something or other,” which sends him to sleep as soon as he “touched the pillow” and, again, the next morning he “felt greatly refreshed, and lay a considerable time in a dozing state, enjoying the sensation of bodily comfort” (*LB* 87-88). The doctor also informs West about the “musical telephone,” a sort of radio clock that, with its fine music, leads him to peaceful slumber (*LB* 124-25). In this utopia, says Dr. Leete, “no anxiety about sleeping” is necessary (*LB* 71). Between each of the lessons of utopia West learns in the daytime under the guidance of Dr. Leete and Edith, Bellamy spills much ink in describing the ways in which the hero slowly overcomes his sleep disorder through the utopia’s new inventions. The process of convalescence from insomnia is in accordance with his education about the life in utopia. At last on the day he becomes acquainted with the organization of the industrial army, the cornerstone of Bellamy’s radical vision of the classless society which allows no political and economic inequality, West no longer suffers from insomnia: “It began to appear, as has since fully proved to be the case, that I had left my tendency to insomnia behind me with the other discomforts of existence in the nineteenth century; for though I took no sleeping draught this time, yet, as the night before, I had no sooner touched the pillow than I was asleep” (*LB* 125).

As a consequence, West's trip to "the Boston of the future," which provides him with mental and physical vitality as well as lessons about social reorganization, "make[s] the real Boston stranger" in a (psycho)pathological sense and bestows him an insight into the widespread anxiety of his times (*LB* 228): "For thirty years I had lived among them, and yet I seemed to have never noted before how drawn and anxious were their faces, of the rich as of the poor, the refined, acute faces of the educated as well as the dull masks of the ignorant" (*LB* 234).¹³

¹³ As noted above, West witnesses the social misery of nineteenth century America while, later in the novel after finishing his education in the utopia, he is dreaming of waking up in his old bunker, saying "I have had an extraordinary dream, ... a most-ex-traor-dinary-dream" (*LB* 226). Hence, readers of *Looking Backward* feel confused as to whether the whole story about a utopian city of Boston they just read is a fictional reality or the hero's empty dream. They undoubtedly know that the novel is a product of Bellamy's imagination, but hearing about its fictive nature directly from the author makes a difference in their attitude toward the story. Only after following in West's wandering footsteps across many parts of Boston of 1887 and watching him awaken from the nightmarish trip to the past to find himself "sitting upright in bed in [his] room in Dr. Leete's house" do readers realize that West's "return to the nineteenth century had been the dream, and [his] presence in the twentieth was the reality" (*LB* 240). Then why did Bellamy add this puzzling episode at the close of the novel? Due to the nature of its purpose and content, *Looking Backward* was likely to be dismissed, as the author wrote in his *Nationalist* article of May 1890, as "a mere literary fantasy, a fairytale of social felicity," an impossible dream or escapist fantasy, at best a pleasant entertainment ("Why I Wrote" 199). Both to avoid falling into the trap of utopian narrative and to remind readers of the feasibility and probability of his design for a future, Bellamy might add the so-called "back to the future" episode in the last chapter of the book, in which West endorses the reality of the utopia as he wakes back to the Boston of the year 2000. On the other hand, it can be assumed that Bellamy appended this episode as a hallmark of utopian literature, a genre which aims to expose present social iniquities through its mirroring portrayal of an idealized future. In this episode, West confesses that "[t]hat strange dream [to the year 2000]... had made all the difference" (*LB* 228). He now obtains a new awareness of "world-wide bloodshed, greed, and tyranny" of which he had previously been ignorant (*LB* 228). It means that *Looking Backward* itself is West's "strange dream." The double dream episode, therefore, functions as a meta-utopian narrative which, by featuring the protagonist's newly acquired insight, addresses the ideal reader's response to utopian literature.

2. An Ethnocentric Utopia: Neurasthenia and American Anxiety

The “inventor” of neurasthenia, George M. Beard, singled out urban modernity as “one constant factor without which there can be little or no nervousness, and under which in its modern form nervousness in its many varieties must arise inevitably” (*American* vi). He claimed that the complex stimulations of modern civilization represented by steam power that quickened the rate and scale of production, the periodical press and the telegraph that increased the tempo of business life, and science that resulted in an explosion in brainwork rapidly squandered well-bred urban Americans’ finite supply of nervous force (Beard, *American* vi).¹⁴ Interestingly, neurasthenia was believed to afflict a large percentage of white, bourgeois, and elite society of the United States, particularly members of the leisure class and “brain-workers.” Their “fine organization” characterized “by fine, soft hair, nicely chiseled features, small bones, tapering extremities, and frequently by a muscular system comparatively small and feeble” was physiological evidence of their “superior intellect”

¹⁴ Contradicting the claim that urban life provokes neurasthenia, however, French physician, Maurice de Fleury, consistently championed the heredity thesis offered by Jean-Martin Charcot. In his article “Les névroses urbains” published in *Les Cahiers de la République des Lettres* (1928), Fleury claimed that

These psychoneuroses, these half-madnesses, have no other cause than heredity. They are essentially constitutional maladies. The milieu, incidents, overexcitement are in no way their profound cause. What in the time of Morel and Magnan one called mental degeneration appears less and less to find its *raison d’être* in ardent activity. . . . These external stimuli [emanating from the city], which from all sides assail us, are like a bath of vital energy. They play for us, at our behest, the beneficent role of military music which relieves the step of the tired soldier, or of the orchestra whose rhythmic accents unleash the muscular strength of dancers. Let us not fear urban life so much (qtd. in Vidler 62-64).

and, at the same time, of their bodily weakness, their exceptional vulnerability to a barrage of sensory stimuli (Beard, *American* 26).

Regardless of class and sex, non-whites were, as mentioned above, not regarded as possible objects of neurasthenia but of hysteria. White muscle workers, with “very strong, old-fashioned constitutions,” were also considered to possess a sort of natural immunity from the deleterious effects of civilization, and in turn, from neurasthenia (Beard, *Sexual* 259). Seeing neurasthenia as a mark of refined white upper-middle-class Americans’ increased supremacy of brain force, high culture, and sensitivity, Beard thus hailed this new disease as a preeminently American ailment, as its famous sufferer William James nicknamed it “Americanitis,” prevalent “mainly within the nineteenth century, and ... especially frequent and severe in the Northern and Eastern portions of the United States” (*American* vi).¹⁵ This explains why Boston Magnetic Company placed the advertisement for Dr. Ransophier’s Electric Magnetic Appliance, claiming that the invention “relieves nervousness and produces sleep, stops neuralgic pains,” in Bellamy’s *The New Nation*, a newspaper subscribed to mostly by learned white middle class Americans.

The actual pathology of neurasthenia, however, had not been discovered.

“[E]xplanations [about neurasthenia] were metaphorical,” John and Robin Haller write,

¹⁵ Playing on William James’s nickname for neurasthenia, the Rexall drug company marketed a tonic called “Americanitis Elixir,” one of the popular over-the-counter remedies that purported to relieve neurasthenia, advertising it as “the fountain of perpetual youth,” “especially recommended for nervous disorder, exhaustion, and all trouble arising from Americanitis.” These tonics including “Dr. Miles’s Nervine” and “Wheller’s Nerve Vitalizers” hid their ingredients, opiates or alcohol, from consumers until 1906, when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) required manufacturers to label ingredients (Tone 10).

“allowing the patient to relax in a simplistic comprehension of his problems, and permitting the clinician to conceal his own ignorance behind an all-encompassing prognosis” (9).¹⁶ Rather than a medical discourse about a well-differentiated clinical entity, the discourse of neurasthenia was “a mosaic of the fashionable and controlling ideas of his time,” which became popular due to the “familiarity, rather than the novelty” of its hypotheses (Rosenberg, “Place” 245-49). The fanciful two-page list of apparently unrelated symptoms, ranging from dyspepsia, headache, near-sightedness, chorea, asthenopia, hay-fever, hypochondria and even to “fear of lightning, or fear of responsibility, of open spaces or closed places, fear of society, fear of being alone, fear of fears, fear of contamination, fear of everything,” yet still “not supposed to be complete,” was the very evidence of the fictitiousness of neurasthenia (Beard, *American* 7-8). As intangible, if not bogus, symptoms like “fear of fear” and “fear of everything,” indicate, neurasthenia manifests as anxiety, or “neurotic anxiety” in a Freudian sense, that freely drifts and attaches itself to any “possible” reference. It was, as discussed in the Introduction, the representative (invented) object of turn-of-the-century American

¹⁶ The following passage from one of Beard’s books on neurasthenia shows his excessive use of metaphor, which did little to define the disease, making his explanation sound ungrounded and even nonsensical. Undoubtedly it hints at the imaginary nature of neurasthenia:

The neurasthenic is a dam with a small reservoir behind it, that often runs dry or nearly so through the torrent at the sluiceway, but speedily fills again from many mountain streams; a small furnace, holding little fuel, and that inflammable and combustible, with strong draught, causing quick exhaustion of materials and imparting unequal, inconstant warmth; a battery with small cells and little potential force, and which with little internal resistance quickly becomes actual force, and so is an inconstant battery, evolving a force sometimes weak, sometimes strong, and requiring frequent repairing and refilling; a day-clock, which, if it be not wound up every twenty-four hours, run utterly down; an engine of its steam; an electric light attached to a small dynamo and feeble storage apparatus, that often flickers and speedily weakens when the dynamo ceases to move. (Beard, *Sexual* 61)

fear. As a mental disease channeled into specific articulation of white Americans' fear of racial others, neurasthenia demonstrated American anxieties about the imminent danger to autonomous "American" selfhood/manhood and played a significant role in designing the shape of American society and culture.

Insomnia constitutes an intermediate stage in the development of neurasthenia (Beard, *American* 55). West's sleeping disorder, therefore, confirms him as a neurasthenic, a palpable example that supports Beard's theory of white upper-middle-class vulnerability to the disease.

As an ideological fabrication of Spencerian social-Darwinism, neurasthenia, as Julian B. Carter claims, paradoxically applauded whites' bodily weakness as a mark of sexual purity, moral and physical self-restraint, innate racial superiority, fitness to rule, and special and privileged relation to the progress of American civilization. "[F]unctioning as a window into the Gilded Age construction of whiteness," its discourse supported "white bourgeois claims to legitimate ownership and dominance of American culture" (Carter 43-44). The paradoxical celebration of white people's weakness, however, does not mask the fact that neurasthenia was basically a discourse about white people's fear, fear of neurological modernity that wracked their bodies and minds, fear of racial others who were presumed to be immune to it, and hence fear of losing their hegemonic position in the industrialized world. In this sense, I would claim that *Looking Backward*, by describing utopia's inhabitants relieved from all kinds of neurasthenic symptoms, imagines a nation in which white Anglo-Saxon Americans no longer feel anxiety about their political and cultural dominance. In other words, I argue that *Looking Backward* is

a racial tract which singles out the white American as a sole legitimate citizen of its utopia.

Taking notice of the socio-psychic implication of West's insomnia, Tom H. Towers regards it as a token of the hero's "sense of social and psychic disturbance" and "resistance to change" (56). Indeed, resonating with the nativist implications of neurasthenia, West's insomnia crystallizes racial anxieties of the age that the author thought incompatible with his utopia. As a member of the white, bourgeois, leisure class "living in luxury, and occupied only with the pursuit of the pleasure and refinement of life," West looks away from social inequality and feels "disturbance" and "resistance" toward poor workers' legitimate effort to get a due reward for their hard work (*LB* 47). Reading a newspaper in his fiancée Edith Bartlett's drawing room on the day he falls into a deep sleep, West rages at "a fresh strike in the building trades" that repeatedly postpones the construction of his luxurious new shelter and, as a consequence, his marriage to Edith (*LB* 55):

I remember distinctly how exasperated I was at this, and the oburgations, as forcible as the presence of the ladies permitted, which I lavished upon workmen in general, and these strikers in particular. I had abundant sympathy from those about me, and the remark made in the desultory conversation which followed, upon the unprincipled conduct of the labor agitators, were calculated to make those gentlemen's ear tingle. It was agreed that affairs were going from bad to worse very fast. (*LB* 55)

A frustrating series of strikes by bricklayers, masons, carpenters, and plumbers inculcate him with a “special animosity” toward the workers, even prompting him to imagine himself a “modern Caligula” who gleefully decapitates the necks of “the laboring classes of America” (*LB* 54, 58).

Beginning with the Great Uprising of 1877, as it became clear that workers shared too little in the prosperity of the age, labor was becoming organized and industrial strife was rampant and violent. There were nearly thirty-seven thousand strikes involving seven million workers between 1881 and 1905 in America (Trachtenberg 80). Writing in an era of growing class conflict, American utopian writers between the 1860s and 1880s, mostly intellectuals and bourgeois reformers, shared, in a way, West’s sense of “disturbance” and “resistance” and endorsed “the bourgeois ideology of the nineteenth century [such as] laissez-faire, social evolution, and progressive tendency of industrialism and democracy” which hailed “the virtues of competition, acquisitiveness, and individual effort” (Pfaelzer, “Impact” 122-24). They believed that the change would come slowly, automatically, eventually, and peacefully and, therefore, rarely paid attention to a causal analysis of history and a methodology for social change, being “indeterminate about what must specifically happen before utopia will occur” (Pfaelzer, “Impact” 126). Debunking socialism, which saw the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeois as a prerequisite for social reorganization, their utopianism had an interest in, as Friedrich Engels criticized, “an accidental discovery of this or that ingenious brain” achieved in an effort to “manufacture a system of society as perfect as possible” without any definite plan (*Socialism* 42).

Likewise, in the fall of 1886 when the Haymarket jury returned the verdict that made its case a notorious example of judicial murder of immigrant workers, Bellamy, as recollected in his 1894 essay “How I Wrote ‘Looking Backward’” in *The Ladies Home Journal*, sat down to his desk to draft “a method of economic organization by which the republic might guarantee the livelihood and material welfare of its citizens on a basis of equality corresponding to and supplementing their political equality” (“How I Wrote” 223).¹⁷ Recognizing, as Dr. Leete acutely diagnoses, “the widespread industrial and social troubles, and the underlying dissatisfaction of all classes with the inequalities of

¹⁷ On May 1, 1886, factions of the nascent labor movement in support of the eight-hour day came together in Chicago for what turned out to be, after three days, the Haymarket affair, in which seven policemen and two civilians were killed when a dynamite bomb landed at the feet of the policemen in the front ranks in the melee during a demonstration against the McCormick Harvester Company. Marking the peak of bloody, organized class struggles in American labor history, followed by the Homestead lockout, the Cripple Creek Miners’ strike, and the Pullman strike, the Haymarket affair threatened the spirit of business enterprise and raised fundamental questions about the rights of labor and the sanctity of private property. In the preface to the American edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Friedrich Engels reviewed the significance of the Haymarket Affair in terms of the birth of working-class consciousness in the United States:

American public opinion was almost unanimous on this one point: that there was no working class, in the European sense of the word, in America; that consequently no class struggle between workmen and capitalists, such as tore European society to pieces, was possible in the American Republic; and that, therefore, Socialism was a thing of foreign importation which could never take root on American soil. And yet, at that moment, the coming class struggle was casting its gigantic shadow before it in the strikes of the Pennsylvania coal-miners, and of many other trades, and especially in the preparations, all over the country, for the great Eight Hours movement which was to come off, and did come off, in the May following. ... [N]o one could then foresee that in such a short time the [working-class] movement would burst out with such irresistible force, would spread with the rapidity of a prairie-fire, would shake American society to its very foundation. ... The spontaneous, instinctive movements of these vast masses of working people, over a vast extent of country, the simultaneous outburst of their common discontent with a miserable social condition, the same everywhere and due to the same cause, made them conscious of the fact, that they formed a new and distinct class of American society; a class of—practically speaking—more or less hereditary wage-workers, proletarians. (*Condition* 303-4)

society,” Bellamy basically supported the motives of the workers and the need for social reorganization (*LB* 72). He saw “the organization of labor and the strikes” as “an effect, merely, of the concentration of capital in greater masses” (*LB* 73). Study in Germany and early experiences as a journalist for the *New York Evening Post*—a newspaper edited by poet William Cullen Bryant, engaged in reform movements regarding tenement evils, sanitary regulation, and corrupt politics—sharpened young Bellamy’s critical eye to social ailments and shaped his socialist political stance. In the second lyceum address of 1871 or 1872 at Chicopee Falls, he explicitly proposed socialism as the solution to the inequalities and man’s “incredible inhumanity” toward man, exacerbated by capitalist exploitation, expressing a concern about widespread American antipathy to socialism (*LB* 50): “Why has the name Socialist by which is designated a believer in this renovation of Society, who denies that the world ought to be administered any longer in the interests of darkness and chaos become a byword and a name of reproach?” (qtd. in Morgan 99). His sympathy with socialism, however, thereafter declined, since, as John L. Thomas points out, Bellamy “disapproved their methods,” distinguishing the violence of socialism from its good cause (94). Calling strikes the “blundering instrument” which “injures society for the sake of individuals” in his 1875 *Springfield Union* article, “The Ethics of the Strike,” Bellamy claimed that they “may be justifiable, but the presumption is against them.”¹⁸ Thirteen years later (and one

¹⁸ Bellamy’s 1873 *Springfield Union* article, “How to Strike,” succinctly exhibits his ambivalent, if not contradictory, perspective on the workers and their labor movement through a paternalistic rhetoric of Christian socialism coupled with Mugwump elitism:

Some business is really curtailed by the state of financial affairs, and in other cases rich corporations take the present opportunity to “grind” their employees

year after the publication of *Looking Backward*) in a June 17, 1888 letter to the mentor William Dean Howells, he explicitly revealed his unreserved antipathy toward socialism:

The word socialist is one I never could well stomach. In the first place it is a foreign word in itself, and equally foreign in all its suggestions. It smells to the average American of petroleum, suggests the red flag, and with all manner of sexual novelties, and an abusive tone about God and religion, which in this country we at least treat with respect. (qtd. in Bowman 114)

In late-nineteenth century United States, the class struggle was inextricably bound up with racial and ethnic conflict. The fear of immigrant workers was also often conflated with the fear of radical socialist and anarchistic doctrines, as shown in the Haymarket trial that sentenced seven German immigrant workers to death, without evidence directly linking the indicted to the actual events. For contemporary upper-middle-class “old-stock” Americans, massive and violent labor strikes hinted at ongoing demographic changes in the population, particularly in the population of poor workers,

[sic]. In either case it is of no-use for the sufferers to stand idly by and grumble. We say to every one of them, Strike! Strike hard and often. That is, strike for less expenditure, which will be equivalent to higher wages. If you have expensive habits, cut them down, choke them off. Girls, don't think your lover is growing cold if he gives you fewer useless presents. Young men, don't notice the fact that your lady wears a little plainer dresses, and less “folde-rol” knick-packs, unless you notice it to congratulate her on her good sense. Fathers, be with your families all the time you can get, improving their mind and your own by reading good works of practical use.

Much ink has been spilled over the ambivalent nature of Bellamy's view of socialism. Arthur Lipow made an exhaustive study into Bellamy's authoritarian socialism in his book, *Authoritarian Socialism in America: Edward Bellamy & the Nationalist Movement*. See also Wilson R. Jackson, “Experience and Utopia: The Making of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*”; Milton Cantor, “The Backward Look of Bellamy's Socialism.”

which created, along with technological and economic changes of advanced capitalism, the new texture of psychopathological experience that tormented their minds (Singer 73). Indeed, Americans' nativism in the period, exacerbated by the mass influx of immigrants, underlay fears of socialism and of racial, cultural, and religious heterogeneity. And these fears were commonly manifested through the rhetoric of pathology and epidemic, as Bellamy expressed his hatred of a foreign socialism through the language of dyspepsia, as something that he "never could well stomach."¹⁹ Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt, in his March 15, 1906 letter to William Howard Taft, proposed, critiquing the Progressive Era in the United States, socialism as a symptom of "a very unhealthy condition of excitement and irritation in the popular mind" (*Letters* 454). Patrick Henry Scullin, in his 1910 anti-socialism pamphlet, *Socialism Means Slavery for the Working Man*, also labeled socialism as a disease, "a disease of the mind, and what is worse ... an infectious disease," and called for the "cure [of] the diseased Socialistic mind or check [of] the growth or spread of Socialism among our otherwise healthy and well-disposed American workmen" (13). Likewise, turn-of-the-century disease panics repudiated foreign immigrants as carriers of epidemic and infectious diseases, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

¹⁹ Labor unions, such as the Grangers, the Sovereigns of Industry, and the Knights of Labor, indeed advocated socialist principles delivered by the German and French immigrants who left their countries after the enactment of the Exception Law by German parliament against socialists in 1848 and later against Jews in the 1870s, and the suppression of the Commune in 1871. However, there also were claims that U.S. socialism was not an import from Europe. For a discussion of American-originated socialism, see James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943*. Tracing back the origin of the Populist agrarianism that supported socialist principles in the Southwest to the natural right philosophy articulated by Tom Paine and Thomas Jefferson, and of Christian socialism to the millennial theology preached by the early radical revivalists, Green explores the originality and scientific basis of American grass-roots socialism.

Quite appropriately, West, “shar[ing] the apprehension of [his] class,” has a pathological fear of socialist doctrine and poor immigrant workers (*LB* 54). He assumes that “the alarm resulting from the talk of a small band of men who called themselves anarchists, and proposed to terrify the American people into adopting their ideas by threats of violence,” has a psychopathological dimension that best illustrates “the nervous tension of the public mind” (*LB* 54). He also claims that his “ancient wooden mansion, very elegant in an old-fashioned way ... occupied by three generations of the family,” has become “undesirable for residence, from its invasion by tenement houses,” presumably for hygienic reasons (*LB* 56). The tenement house, as Jacob Riis documented its “cosmopolitan character” in *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), infiltrated into once quiet, middle-class residential districts in the late nineteenth century to accommodate starving, ragged workers from the countryside and other “backward” countries who flooded the city for looking jobs.²⁰ Due to its squalid living conditions,

²⁰ Taking the case of a notorious Fourth Ward alley in lower Manhattan, where, out of “one hundred and forty families, one hundred Irish, thirty-eight Italian, and two that spoke the German tongue” dwelled, Riis, in *How the Other Half Lives*, enumerated the diverse inhabitants of the tenement district including Italian, German, French, African, Spanish, Bohemian, Scandinavian, Jewish, Chinese, and Arab immigrants, and concluded, “The one thing you shall vainly ask for in the chief city of America is a distinctively American community. There is none; certainly not among the tenements” (73). The changing demographic character of Boston’s South End, in which West’s old mansion might have been located, was not far different from that of lower Manhattan. The South End, once a burgeoning middle-class district, was becoming a tenement district in the 1880s, attracting recent immigrants and Irish Catholics, especially after many houses were repossessed by banks and sold at drastically reduced rates following the Panics of 1873 and 1884 and converted into lodging houses and apartments. The rapid ghettoization of the South End in this period was also in part due to the emergence of new residential housing for the white middle class in Back Bay and Roxbury (Sammarco 23). High death rates in Boston, 23.75 in 1880 and 24.42 in 1889 (the number of death per year per 1000 people), comparable to those in New York, 26.47 in 1880 and 25.19 in 1889, indicate the gruesome living conditions of the Boston ghetto (Riis 255-58).

the tenement house was viewed as a heterogeneous, insanitary and infested place, as epicenter of epidemics detrimental to the public health, particularly to that of “old stock” neighbors.

A cursory reading of *Looking Backward*, however, suggests that, despite West’s “special animosity” toward immigrant workers, Bellamy neither paid much attention to the issue of race and ethnicity nor explicitly elucidated the character of the utopian inhabitants. It seems at first sight that he was concerned only about creating a classless utopia, debunking the role of “the followers of the red flag ... in the establishment of the new order of things” (*LB* 192). In his utopia, according to Dr. Leete, all men and women from the age of twenty-one until retirement at forty-five are members of the industrial army, “a vast industrial partnership, as large as the nation, as large as humanity,” with all its ranks and insignia but an exactly equal stipend (*LB* 121). “[O]rganized as the one great business corporation in which all other corporations were absorbed,” the industrial army functions as “the one capitalist in the place of all other capitalist, the sole employer, the final monopoly” and provides a workforce needed for the production and distribution of public goods and services (*LB* 76). Yet Bellamy’s portrait of the industrial army lacks a detailed description of its workers. There is no description of factories. “Goods simply appeared,” writes R. Jackson Wilson, “as if untouched by human hands, in the wholesale warehouse and passed quickly through it to centers of consumption” (47). Hence, no visible workingmen can be found in utopia. West encounters just two service workers, the waiter and store clerk (two individuals he meets in utopia besides the Leetes), who

say absolutely nothing but work as ordered to do, acting only as objects of West's conversation with Edith. There exists no conversation between them that will provide any pertinent information about the utopian inhabitants. The waiter takes Edith's order in a restaurant and delivers food, and the clerk only appears in response to a call button that Edith presses (*LB* 103-6, 135-36). Only "[s]parse and antiseptic comments" about faceless laborers with "the depersonalized and automatic qualities of soldiers on duty" exist in *Looking Backward* (Cantor 25). No wonder, as Jonathan Auerbach insightfully points out, that what is missing in West's initial view of Boston in the year 2000, a dazzling mixture of colossal buildings and trees, is the people who inhabit it (28).

The lack of racial specification of the utopian inhabitants perhaps invited racist critiques like Arthur Dudley Vinton's *Looking Further Backward* (1890), a dystopian sequel to *Looking Backward*, that explicitly argued for the incompatibility of American utopia with racial heterogeneity. Narrated by Chinese General Wong Lung Li, Vinton's novel paints a dark picture of America in the year 2033, when it has become a colony of China; a place once called New England has a new name, North Eastern Division of the Chinese Province of North America. Playing on the nativist fear of immigration, *Looking Further Backward* warned readers of the danger posed by the new ethnic composition of the American working class and debunked the utopian socialism that naively pushed the United States toward a color blind nation.²¹

²¹ For a further discussion about the anti-immigration, anti-socialist, and anti-feminist message of Arthur Dudley Vinton's dystopian novel, see Pfaelzer, *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896: The Politics of Form* 86-90.

Bellamy's seeming nonchalance about the racial identity of utopia's inhabitants, however, rather attests to his implicit acknowledgement of white Anglo-Saxon dominance and ownership of the utopia. If "forgetting," as Ernest Renan maintained in his lecture "What is a Nation?", "is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation" (11), it is Bellamy's "forgetting" of race that enabled the foundation of a classless yet ethnocentric utopian society. Seeing class as the sole origin of "unequal distribution of wealth, and, still more effectually, unequal opportunities of education and culture" (*LB* 136), Dr. Leete assumes that marriage based on class and material possessions impedes the biological evolution of people by checking "the natural impulse to seek in marriage the best and noblest of the other sex" (*LB* 202-3). Accordingly, people seek their partners purely out of love in a classless utopia.

"Think of a world in which there are nothing but matches of pure love!"

... "It means that for the first time in human history the principle of sexual selection, with its tendency to preserve and transmit the better types of the race, and let the inferior types drop out, has unhindered operation. The necessities of poverty, the need of having a home, no longer tempt women to accept as the fathers of their children men whom they neither can love nor respect. Wealth and rank no longer divert attention from personal qualities. Gold no longer 'gilds the straitened forehead of the fool.' The gifts of person, mind, and disposition; beauty, wit, eloquence, kindness, generosity, geniality, courage, are sure of transmission to posterity. Every generation is sifted through a little finer

mesh than the last. The attributes that human nature admires are preserved, those that repel it are left behind.” (*LB* 201-2)

Indeed, there are “a great many women who with love must mingle admiration, and seek to wed greatly, but these not the less obey the same law, for to wed greatly now is not to marry men of fortune or title, but those who have risen above their fellows by the solidarity of brilliance of their services to humanity” (*LB* 202). In this way, Dr. Leete considers marriage, in which both partners choose their spouses according to “the principle of sexual selection,” as an eugenic vehicle through which to facilitate biological evolution.²²

Equating the economic and political advance of society with the process of biological evolution, Bellamy saw “[e]volution, not revolution” as the “true policy” of utopia (“Looking Forward” 177). He sought to realize “the idea of the nation ... as a family, a vital union, a common life, a mighty heaven-touching tree whose leaves are its people, fed from its vein, and feeding it in turn” in his utopia (*LB* 193-94). In this sense, the improved health of utopian inhabitants not only represents the general welfare of people but also functions as evidence of the biological evolution achieved by eugenic reproduction and fitness in marriage.

²² The English scientist Francis Galton originally coined the term “eugenics” in his 1883 book, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, defining it as “the science of improving the stock” which aims to give “the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had” (24-25). Eugenics became a politically and scientifically influential movement in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in Great Britain, the United States, and Germany. American eugenics was the most advanced at the beginning of the twentieth century, aggressively institutionalizing marriage, birth-control, and sterilization as eugenic vehicles that would lead toward racial hygiene and the betterment of American race. The issue of eugenics as a biopolitical and disciplinary practice will be discussed further in Chapter IV on Sinclair Lewis’s *Arrowsmith*.

Given the conservative nature of social Darwinism on which *Looking Backward* was built, Bellamy's championing of social evolution implies the utopia's attachment to existing political, social, and racial relationships.²³ Although Dr. Leete, stressing "pure love" as the principle of utopia, maintains that the nationalization of industry serves the interests not only of the working class but "equally of all classes, of rich and poor, cultured and ignorant, old and young, weak and strong, men and women," Bellamy's utopia is built on the ideological status quo, completely forgetting and leaving out "race," that is, racial minorities (*LB* 193). As a consequence of a biological evolution that works to "preserve and transmit the better types of the race, and let the inferior types drop out," there no longer exist "inferior" racial minorities in utopia, and, accordingly, Bellamy felt no need to elaborate on the racial and ethnic character of the utopian inhabitants. In this sense, considering that West's suffering from neurasthenic insomnia

²³ In a book review of Herbert Spencer's *The Principles of Sociology* (1876-96), Bellamy wrote that Spencer, forecasting a "complete perfection" for man, has shown his "gradual development by the influence of his environment upon his faculties, the co-working of the external with the internal forces" (qtd. in Bowman 161). Due to his belief in social "evolution" based on an optimistic view of man's future, Bellamy's Nationalism was called "American" socialism with "the silk hat on" (Bowman 128). Ernst Bloch, regarding Bellamy's utopia as a product of "an impossible stroke of good fortune," similarly, claims that *Looking Backward* is a mere romance that fails to demonstrate social changes relevant to its historic context (qtd. in Roemer 410). Raymond Williams, similarly, calls Bellamy's utopia "a work without desire" (57). In this sense, Jean Pfaelzer reads West's mesmeric deep slumber as an "ahistorical" device that, dramatizing the evolutionary process, represents the premature resolution of social contradictions ("Impact" 118). Bellamy's earlier novel, *The Duke of Stockbridge: A Romance of Shay's Rebellion* (1879), is the definitive declaration of his firm belief in evolution, a slow spontaneous change from above dependent on the leadership of intellectual classes, and in the impossibility of a proletariat revolution. The novel recounts Shay's Rebellion, an armed uprising in central and western Massachusetts from 1786 to 1787 led by a farmer and veteran of the American Revolutionary War, Daniel Shay, which pulled George Washington out of retirement and caused the ratification of the Constitution. Bellamy's fictional anatomy of an uprising of poor, indebted farmers who lacked the leadership, lofty standards of solidarity, and moral foundation on which to build a better society discloses his skepticism about class politics and the leading role of the working-class. John L. Thomas points out that, on the surface, *The Duke of Stockbridge* is "a story of revolution that failed, but in a deeper sense it is a story of failure of politics" (95).

echoes whites' fears about effeminacy, overcivilization, and racial decadence, his recovery from the disease in utopia symbolically dramatizes the process of "race purification," which brings "not only a physical, but a mental and moral improvement" to Anglo-Saxon Americans, as well as the expulsion of racial minorities from Bellamy's ethnocentric utopia (*LB* 202).

The way the novel "forgets" its sole non-Anglo-Saxon character, West's nineteenth-century black servant, a "faithful colored man by the name of Sawyer" reenacts the process of "forgetting" of race that founds an ethnocentric utopia (*LB* 56). Sawyer is portrayed as a stereotypical "Uncle Tom" who is reliable enough to keep West's secrets—the existence of the sleeping bunker and his frequent abuse of mesmerism which carries a risk of "pass[ing] into a trance beyond the mesmerist's power to break, ending in death" (*LB* 57-58). It means that, at his whim, Sawyer could obliterate his master by not awaking him from a mesmeric sleep. Yet he is a faithful servant, and hence West says, awakening from his 113-year sleep, "Sawyer would never have betrayed me" (*LB* 70). "West's travel to the future," as Matthew Hartman notes, "depends upon a fluke" (39). Because his neighbors presume that he has died in the fire, no one wakes West until he is discovered by Dr. Leete. Based on the layer of ashes Dr. Leete found above the sleeping chamber, however, West rather figures out that his long time-travel sleep became possible because "Sawyer lost his life in the fire or by some accident connected with it" (*LB* 70). That is, it is more the death of the black servant than a mere fluke that, in a symbolic way, makes possible the opening of the utopian city

of Boston to readers of *Looking Backward*. Despite his crucial role in the creation of utopia, however, Sawyer and his black descendants are completely “forgotten.”

3. The Frontiers of Utopia

Bellamy’s first important biographer, Arthur E. Morgan, identifies the end of the frontier, along with class struggle, as the causes of the social and economic stresses in the late-nineteenth-century United States in his chapter on the sources of *Looking Backward* (204-13). As discussed in the Introduction to this dissertation, America was built on the idea of the expansive imagination of people who kept dreaming about the lands of regeneration to the West. Functioning as a safety valve for urban discontent, the unexplored territory, as Friedrich Engels wrote in his August 8, 1851 letter to Joseph Weydemeyer, formulated “the special American conditions” in which “the surplus population is drained off to the farms” and transform themselves into “American” pioneers (Marx & Engels 25). Hence the closure of the frontier, no longer allowing the drainage of poor “surplus” immigrant workers from the city, forced urban “old-stock” Americans to come to terms with unresolved heterogeneity and the consequent class conflict.

Yet in fact, as a purely material entity, the frontier was far from closed. “[N]ot many workers actually did set out for the West,” and the “escape from onerous work conditions in the East to free land in the West was largely a myth” (Howe 123-24). As a concept that “belonged to the complex of traditional ideas,” the frontier, according to Richard Slotkin, was indeed a space of the national myth that expressed “the concept of

pioneering as a defining national mission, a “Manifest Destiny,” and the vision of the westward settlements as a refuge from tyranny and corruption” and “a land of golden opportunity for enterprising individualists, and an inexhaustible reservoir of natural wealth on which a future of limitless prosperity could be based” (30). The idea of the diminishing frontier, as Norman Mailer suggests in his novel *Oswald’s Tale: An American Mystery*, therefore turned Americans’ “imagination inevitably ... into paranoia” (723), which, as in the case of neurotic anxiety, involves feelings disproportionate to the magnitude of threat facing an individual. Characterizing paranoia as a regenerative political device that has enabled Americans to assuage national anxiety, Richard Hofstadter, in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, casts Populism (along with anti-Masonry and McCarthyism) as an instance of an American “paranoid style” built on “systemized delusions of persecution and of one’s own greatness” (6-9). Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* was widely read and praised by middle-class reformers and professionals who, sharing the author’s moral outrage, formed Nationalist Clubs in cities across America, from Boston to Los Angeles, and by the end of 1890 these Bellamyite Nationalists were being accepted as delegates at the national and state conference of reformers that gave birth to the People’s Party, also known as the Populists. It can thus be assumed that the anxious imagination of *Looking Backward*, painstakingly creating a class-less and race-less utopia, prognosticated the paranoid style of Populist rhetoric. Moreover, the fact that Populism, as Frederick Jackson Turner suggested, manifested “the old pioneer ideals of the native American, with the added element of increasing readiness to utilize the national government to effect its ends”

(148), further demonstrates the significance of the spatial anxiety about the diminishing frontier through which *Looking Backward* and Populism commonly developed their paranoiac imagination, as well as their racist, class-oriented ideology.

When West is reading and raging at the news about rampant industrial warfare, his soon-to-be mother-in-law Mrs. Bartlett informs him of a conversation she had with her husband.

“The worst of it,” I [Julian West] remember Mrs. Bartlett’s saying, “is that the working classes all over the world seem to be going crazy at once. In Europe it is far worse even than here. I’m sure I should not dare to live there at all. I asked Mr. Bartlett the other day where we should emigrate to if all the terrible things took place which those socialists threaten. He said he did not know where society could be called stable except Greenland, Patagonia, and the Chinese Empire.” “Those Chinamen knew what they were about,” somebody added, “when they refused to let in our western civilization. They knew what it would lead to better than we did. They saw it was nothing but dynamite in disguise.” (*LB* 55)

Imagining “all the terrible things” in a paranoid manner, the old couple reveals the apocalyptic sentiment that underlies the widespread racist anti-socialism in late nineteenth-century America. Mr. Bartlett’s idle enumeration of places for refuge, such as Greenland, Patagonia, and China, unfolding the American demand for a frontier that bolstered American civilization paradoxically by “refus[ing] to let in,” exposes the

dominance of the spatial imagination that gave birth to the popularity of utopian fictions, along with historical romances, in the 1880s-1900s.

“When men could no longer transform their dreams into actualities,” writes Robert Shurter, “they committed them to paper in the form of utopian vision” (66). Elucidating the connection between the issue of frontier and utopian fictions, he aptly dubs Americans’ demand for westward expansion “applied Utopianism” (Shurter 66). Darko Suvin, similarly, labels the utopia of *Looking Backward* as a “new frontier, replacing the West traversed by the irreversible rails” (59). Bellamy’s new frontier “offers not only better railways, motor carriage, air-cars, telephones, and television, but also a classless social brotherhood of affluence that will make these means of communication generally accessible and socialize all other upper-class privileges, including culture” (Suvin 59). Here the alleged incompatibility of the class conflict with the open frontier suggests that West’s neurasthenic insomnia, implying contemporary white Americans’ apprehension about class relations, is bound up with spatial anxiety. Indeed, the common treatment for neurasthenia, particularly for its male patients, was a retreat to the frontier in the West, just as Theodore Roosevelt took a trip to South Dakota in the early 1880s to cure his asthma and other neurasthenic symptoms and returned East to become the Rough Rider and the advocator of the strenuous life (Bederman 130). The nervous ailing Bellamy also made two therapeutic retreats to the frontiers, once to California and Hawaii in 1878 and then to Colorado in 1897 (Bowman 41, 151). The therapeutic function of the frontier, in this sense, enables us to read *Looking Backward* as a medical record. Not only does it literally record the process of West’s convalescence

from neurasthenic insomnia, but it figuratively enacts the resolution of the era's neurotic anxiety about class/race struggles through the creation of a sterilized utopia qua frontier.

If the industrial army is Bellamy's panacea for the social problems of class-war ridden America, it is the federal union that the author invented to address the paranoiac fear of the diminishing frontier. On the morning following his first good night's sleep in utopia, West is educated about how the global political system of 2000 has been reorganized as the new order of utopia, called the federal union. According to Dr. Leete,

[T]he great nations of Europe as well as Australia, Mexico, and parts of South America, are now organized industrially like the United States, which was the pioneer of the evolution. The peaceful relations of these nations are assured by a loose form of federal union of worldwide extent. An international council regulates the mutual intercourse and commerce of the members of the union and their joint policy toward the more backward races, which are gradually being educated up to civilized institutions. Complete autonomy within its own limits is enjoyed by every nation. (*LB* 126)

Presumably modeled after the First International (International Workingmen's Association; 1864-1876), the federal union, an international extension of the industrial army, epitomizes Bellamy's utopian vision of "an eventual unification of the world as one nation" which, as "the ultimate form of society," "realize[s] certain economic advantages over the present federal system" (*LB* 128). "No nation," however, even if it is a utopian nation, as Benedict Anderson notes, "imagines itself coterminous with

mankind” (7). It is necessarily “imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (7). Likewise, the idea of the federal union is built on the boundary dividing its center, such as America, the European nations and their colonies, from the periphery, a place for “the more backward races.” Bellamy at first sight seems to believe in the possibility of racial advancement, saying that they “are gradually being educated up to civilized institutions.” Given that “backward races” are still in the gradual (presumably never-ending) process of civilizing even in the age of utopia, however, it is no more than a euphemistic expression of their insurmountable inferiority.²⁴

Bellamy’s utopia protects the unrestricted “right of any man to emigrate at any time,” a right that virtually blurs the boundary between the nations of the federal union

²⁴ Responding to contemporary readers’ doubts and questions about his attitude toward racial minorities, Bellamy briefly mentioned the equality between black and white in an 1889 *The Nationalist* article: “It[Nationalism] represents peculiarly neither men nor women, North nor South, black nor white, poor nor rich, educated nor ignorant, employers nor employed, but all equally” (“Looking Forward” 176). In *Equality*, the sequel to *Looking Backward*, he also noted “the existence in the Southern States of many millions of recently freed negro slaves, but partially as yet equal to the responsibilities of freedom” and “a strong prejudice on the part of the white population against any system which compelled a closer commingling of the races” (*Equality* 364-65). He then claimed that African-Americans, as the last resort, will, benefiting from the paternalistic benevolence of a utopia, “educate, refine, and elevate” themselves to the level of civilization: “the universal education and the refinements and amenities of life which came with the economic welfare presently brought to all alike by the new order, meant for the colored race even more as a civilizing agent than it did to the white population which relatively had been further advanced” (*Equality* 365). Yet, again, even in the more advanced utopia of *Equality*, African-Americans are still far away from the achievement of civilization. Bellamy’s relatively positive view of blacks, however, might be possible because blacks were not a threat to the dominance of the white “old-stock” American. On the contrary, white ethnics, such as Irish, Italian and Slav immigrants, whom David R. Roediger calls “dark white” in his *Working Toward Whiteness* (4), never received a favorable comment from Bellamy, presumably due to threat they posed to the pure “white” Americans.

(*LB* 129). Responding to West's inquiry about the utopia's immigration policy, Dr. Leete explains,

“There is constant emigration, by which I suppose you mean removal to foreign countries for permanent residence,” replied Dr. Leete. “It is arranged on a simple international arrangement of indemnities. For example, if a man at twenty-one emigrates from England to America, England loses all the expense of his maintenance and education, and America gets a workman for nothing. America accordingly makes England an allowance. The same principle, varied to suit the case, applies generally. If the man is near the term of his labor when he emigrates, the country receiving him has the allowance. (*LB* 128-29)

A careful reader would note that the reification of labor as a commodity-form befitting capitalist relations of production underlies the principle of “indemnities.” Along with the fact that the existence of the industrial army does away with local and state governments, political parties, and democratic public life in utopia, giving no suffrage to its inhabitants, the commodification of the worker shapes Bellamy's ideal society into a sort of industrial unit with a military bureaucracy. Furthermore, we can also see, from Dr. Leete's example of an Englishman who emigrates to the Anglo-Saxon cousin nation across the sea, the underlying racial-spatial hierarchy existing between the federal union and the frontiers. In the federal union, race functions as the “universal equivalent,” the measure by which labor powers between countries are compared and exchanged.

Accordingly, workers from “backward races” from the periphery cannot be measured and emigrated, and this also explains the non-existence of racial groups in the utopia.

The racial-spatial division between the center and the periphery and the rhetoric of “civilizing mission” attest that the federal union shares common ground with the nascent American imperialism of the 1890s. Built on the European assumption of the white rule over the backward people as a necessary stage in the inevitable march of progress, American imperialism initially manifested itself as a sort of “prescriptive imperialism,” which, anxious about European incursion into Western Hemisphere, claimed the need to “seize desirable areas before a rival power got them” (Healy 28). Taking the form of the triumphant vindication of the Monroe Doctrine, American imperialism at first aimed to wield diplomatic and economic influence in Latin America in order to restrict the imperial exploitation of resources and potential profits by the European powers. In this sense, the federal union’s seemingly humanistic “joint policy toward the more backward races” expresses the American anxiety about belatedness on the imperial stage as the latest arrival among the great powers.

Despite significant anti-imperialist sentiment that condemned the American Empire stretching beyond the continent as almost a heresy that denigrated the Constitution, the United States, incorporating the myth of the frontier in a global dimension, began to compete in the race for colonies and annexed Hawai’i, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines in 1898. These overseas frontiers were believed to cure the social and economic ills of the country, as well as their frail, neurasthenic bodies and impaired masculinity. The therapeutic function of the American overseas colonies will

be examined in detail in Chapter IV on Lewis's *Arrowsmith*, in which I explore the collusion between American expansionism and medical science contingent upon American anxiety about racial decadence and effeminacy.

Coda

Unlike race, willfully overlooked in the new order of *Looking Backward*, Edward Bellamy paid due attention to gender by devoting a chapter and few more pages to the discussion of improvement in the status of women who gain a greater degree of social equality with men. According to Mrs. Leete, the “nationalization” of housework relieves women from grueling household drudgery: “Our washing is all done in public laundries at excessively cheap rates, and our cooking at public kitchens. The making and repairing of all we wear are done outside in public shops. Electricity, of course, takes the place of all fires and lighting” (*LB* 113). Like men, women between the ages of six and twenty-one have the opportunity for higher education, and women between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five serve in a female guild of the industrial army, led by a woman general-in-chief. However, we cannot simply state that Bellamy's utopia is “a paradise for womankind,” as West exclaims on witnessing the public facilities for women (*LB* 114). Although ostensibly a feminist society, his utopia is still built upon Victorian patriarchal attitudes that devalue women's intellect and capacity to govern. As Dr. Leete maintains, women “are under an entirely different discipline” and “constitute rather an allied force than an integral part of the army of men” (*LB* 196). They elect their own leaders of the guild but have no suffrage in any presidential election of the industrial

army. In spite of abundant leisure secured by state-owned household factories, women do not devote themselves to professional and intellectual pursuits, as shown in the case of Edith. Removed from the scenes where Dr. Leete conducts “man talk” about the politics and economics of the utopia with West, she returns to play a traditional nurturing female role when West needs emotional comfort and support. She even dubiously accepts West as her husband, presumably only because he was a fiancée of her great-grandmother. In Bellamy’s utopia, as Sylvia Strauss observes, a woman “is not complete unless she is married and a mother,” and all public amenities that liberated her from household duties are indeed “provided to induce women to opt for the status of wife and mother” (78). Particularly from Dr. Leete’s dubbing of his daughter as “an indefatigable shopper,” we see persistent patriarchal gender norms operating in Bellamy’s utopia (*LB* 101).

The neurasthenic body of the Anglo-Saxon man was a battleground where late nineteenth-century American medicine wielded its classifying power to justify a racial hierarchy favoring whites over others. It was also a battleground between the two sexes, to a lesser extent, where American male physicians and neurologists utilized man’s bodily weakness as a paradoxical proof of his sexual superiority over woman. Although an educated Anglo-Saxon woman was also liable to neurasthenia, her nervous body and mind, unlike those of man, worked rather as a sign of her limited reservoir of nerve-force and intellectual inferiority. In this sense, Dr. Leete’s championing of “the magnificent health which distinguishes our women” from their nervous, defiant nineteenth-century counterparts can be read as an expression of his patriarchal complacency in utopia’s

obedient women who do not “waste” their limited nerve force on manly intellectual and professional pursuits (*LB* 196). Yet it was more of the pathology of hysteria than neurasthenia that, considering a nervous female body as a biological evidence of female inferiority, functioned to police sexual boundaries between man and woman, as will be examined in the following chapter on Gertrude Stein’s short story “Melanctha: Each One As She May.”

CHAPTER III

A CASE HISTORY OF A MULATTO HYSTERIC:

RACIAL AND SEXUAL POLITICS IN GERTRUDE STEIN'S "MELANTHA"

Written in 1905-6, shortly after Gertrude Stein abandoned her study of medicine at Johns Hopkins Medical School, "Melantha: Each One As She May," the second story of *Three Lives*, adopted a medical and psychological approach for the characterization of its namesake heroine Melantha Herbert, creating, as William Carlos Williams insightfully remarked, "a thrilling clinical record of the life of a colored woman" (23). Indicating the pathological nature of "Melantha," Stein's biographer James R. Mellow takes notice of the "slow, patient, *clinical manner* in which the power and perversity of human character, the waywardness of passion, are analyzed and laid bare" and of the "*psychologically* acute analysis of Melantha's character, of her uneasy relationships with her parents" (73; emphases added). Daylanne English similarly argues that *Three Lives* "enacts 'elaborately constructed metaphors' of medical documentation through literary experimentation" in her article "Gertrude Stein and the Politics of Literary-Medical Experimentation." She describes Stein as "a prototype for [Ezra] Pound's modern writer as diagnostician and physician" who "exerts clinical authority ..., narrat[ing] and diagnos[ing] the lives of its three racially and ethnically marginalized characters" (188-90).¹ "Three Histories," the original title of the work Stein described as

¹ English's article begins with the epigraph quoted from Ezra Pound's essay "The Serious Artist": "as there are in medicine the art of diagnosis and the art of cure, so in the arts, so in particular the arts of poetry and of literature, there is the art of diagnosis and there is the art of

a tribute to Gustave Flaubert's *Three Tales* (1877), in this sense suggests that *Three Lives* is a catalogue of three medical "case histories" in which the author/physician diagnoses and records pathological symptoms of the three patients.

The epigraph of *Three Lives*, "*Donc je suis un malheureux et ce n'est ni ma faute ni celle de la vie*" ("Thus I am unhappy and this is neither my fault nor that of life"), fictionally attributed to the French post-Baudelairean Romantic poet Jules Laforgue, foreshadows the three heroines' miserable lives, recapitulating the thematic determinism pervading the three novellas.² It makes a fitting epigraph for medical case histories in which all patients abruptly succumb to lonely deaths. The first story, "The Good Anna," concludes, "Then they did the operation, and then the good Anna with her strong, strained, worn-out body died" (TL 56).³ "The Gentle Lena," similarly, ends with the sentence, "When it was all over Lena had died, too, and nobody knew just how it had happened to her" (TL 200). "Melanctha" follows the same pattern: "Melanctha went back to the hospital, and there the Doctor told her she had the consumption, and before long she would surely die. They sent her where she would be taken care of, a home for poor consumptives, and there Melanctha stayed until she died" (TL 167). *Three Lives* is indeed, as Werner Sollors claims, "a book about the deaths of three working-class women" (18). Janice Doane reiterates this reading when she entitles the chapter on *Three*

cure" (qtd. in 188).

² While Stein's epigraph represents, as Carl Wood points out in his article "Continuity of Romantic Irony: Stein's Homage to Laforgue in *Three Lives*," the major hallmark of the Laforguean style, that is, the peculiar combination of pessimism and light-heartedness, the intentionally ineloquent, and conversational style, Jules Laforgue never wrote these lines (147).

³ All page numbers preceded by TL are from Stein's *Three Lives*.

Lives in her book *Silence and Narrative: The Early Novels of Gertrude Stein* as “Three Deaths” (52).

In the medical record of the deceased, death is the final diagnosis through which a physician traces the development of a patient’s fatal illness and retrospectively reconstructs the trajectory of his or her life. “It is from the height of death,” as Michel Foucault argues in *The Birth of the Clinic*, “that one can see and analyze organic dependences and pathological sequences” (144):

Instead of being what it had so long been, the night in which life disappeared, in which even the disease becomes blurred, it is now endowed with that great power of elucidation that dominates and reveals both the space of the organism and the time of the disease. The privilege of its intemporality, which is no doubt as old as the consciousness of its imminence, is turned for the first time into a technical instrument that provides a grasp on the truth of life and the nature of its illness. Death is the great analyst that shows the connections by unfolding them, and bursts open the wonders of genesis in the rigor of decomposition.

(Foucault, *Birth* 144)

“Life, disease, and death,” Foucault continues, “form a technical and conceptual trinity, ... a triangular figure the summit of which is defined by death” (*Birth* 144). In

“Melanctha” the heroine contracts tuberculosis, one of the alleged symptoms of hysteria, and dies alone in a sanatorium.⁴ It is the first clue, “the great analyst,” that makes

⁴ In *A Clinical System of Tuberculosis*, the early twentieth century German physicians, Bruno

possible to “see and analyze” the story as a medical record of the black hysteric Melanctha, which Stein created based on stereotypical traits and motives of the hysterical character, such as wandering mind, traumatic sexual experiences, histrionic personality, and homosexuality, that she had culled from the late nineteenth-century medical theories of female maladies.

Like neurasthenia, hysteria was not a well-differentiated clinical entity for which most medical practitioners could draw up the same list of symptoms. As the “English Hippocrates” Thomas Sydenham wrote in 1681, “The frequency of hysteria is no less remarkable than the multiformity of the shapes which it puts on” and “[f]ew of the maladies of miserable mortality are not imitated by it,” hysteria could imitate the symptoms of almost every known disease such as coughs, hiccups, tremors, tics, fainting, convulsion, and impaired vision, hearing and taste (qtd. in Morris 108). It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that hysteria earned the status of a clinical disease diagnosed as a neurosis or a disorder with more specific, yet still abstract, symptoms, and physicians and neurologists of this period believed that hysteria was apt to appear in young, educated white women. Seeing their rebelliousness, immoderate sexual appetite, and intelligence as causes of the disease, male physicians administered dreadful treatments to hysterical women (Morris 108). Based on the classical understanding of

Bandelier and Otto Roepke, wrote,

Hysteria and tuberculosis approach each other closely. Even a slight tubercular infection, and still more fever, anaemia, and inanition may in latent hysteria call forth such severe manifestations that the symptoms of tuberculosis may be masked by those of hysteria; such a condition has been called “hysterical phthisis.” ... All these nervous conditions occur more often in early than in late cases of tuberculosis, in women than in men, and in persons of the upper than in the laboring class. With advance of the tubercular disease the intensity of the nervous symptoms diminishes.” (431-32)

hysteria as “wandering womb”—an idea, with more than two thousand years of history tracing back to the ancient Greeks, that linked virtually all diseases experienced by women to the vagaries of the female reproductive system—they cauterized patients’ clitorises and even performed the ovariectomies.⁵ According to Ann Douglas Wood, the rest cure, a more humane treatment of hysteria invented by S. Weir Mitchell, was also “a punishment and an agent of regeneration” which, symbolically replicating the conditions of pregnancy, the visible emblem of masculine potency and feminine submissiveness, confined the patient to the bed, flat on her back and permitted neither to read nor, in some cases, to rise to urinate for some six weeks (37).

Indeed, hysteria was a mélange of folk medical beliefs influenced by nineteenth-century physiognomic and anthropological theories in vogue that justified and sustained a blatant misogyny, re-inscribing sex as the major explanatory factor for the alleged limited intellectual capability and lack of moral integrity of women. The etiologic and

⁵ In his 1883 article, “Therapeutics of the Nervous System,” published in *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Charles. L. Dana wrote,

Dr. N. Friedreich believes, with Baker Brown, that many cases of hysteria are caused by masturbation. Further, he is of opinion that in neuropathic females an over-sensitiveness of the sexual organs may exist, which acts upon the spinal and cerebral centres, causing hysterical symptoms, without there being actual, voluntary masturbation. He treats these cases by cauterizing the clitoris. The operation is most painful, but the results are so remarkable and agreeable that the patients, say Dr. F., never object to a repetition. (177)

For the significance of genitalia—in particular, the clitoris—in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sexual pathology, which views it as an origin of all of woman’s deviance and thereby a place to be “cured,” see Thomas Power Lowry, ed., *The Classic Clitoris: Historic Contributions to Scientific Sexuality*. That the term “hysteria” comes from the Greek word ὕστέρα (“uterus”) attests to the Greek origin of hysteria. See Christopher Faraone’s recent essay, “Magical and Medical Approaches to the Wandering Womb in the Ancient Greek World,” which succinctly examines how scholars of the classical and Hellenistic periods such as Plato, the Hippocratic writers, Soranus of Ephesus, and Galen developed the “wandering womb” theory in which the womb that moves freely about a woman’s body is held responsible for all hysterical symptoms. For a general account of the history of hysteria, see Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease*.

symptomatic diagnosis of hysteria and its remedies had undergone a change, and hence the nineteenth-century understanding of hysteria was not necessarily related to what twentieth-century clinicians called the hysteric character. Yet its exclusive relevance to the female experience, in myth although not always, suggests that the symbolic meanings of hysteria had not been challenged.⁶ Heavily permeated by middle-class (white) male anxiety over masculine identity in crisis, it was always the discourse of male dominance and of managing a disobedient wife and daughter. Mitchell thus ended one of his treatises on hysteria, *Doctor and Patient* (1887), with the comment that “Physicians make good husbands, and this is in part due to the fact that their knowledge of the difficulties of feminine life causes them to be more thoughtfully tender, and more charitable as concerns the effects upon women of certain inevitable conditions as to which the layman is ignorant or indifferent” (99).

Stein was a lesbian and a woman, one who was marginalized within the discourse of hysteria that pathologized and even demonized the sexualized female body. Hence, her portrayal of Melanctha as a hysteric can be a problematic issue, which demonstrates the power and danger of sexual ideology and its underlying misogynistic fear that forced her to ventriloquize the voice of masculine authority. Given that white racial prejudice also underlies the discourse of hysteria, as will be discussed below, the

⁶ Interestingly, Jean-Martin Charcot’s fame rested partly on his unprecedented diagnoses of male trauma victims as hysterics. Nearly 25 percent of his patients were hysteric men. Thus he said, “Male hysteria is not at all rare, and, just among us, gentlemen, if I can judge from what I see each day, these cases are often unrecognized even by very distinguished doctors” (qtd. in Baer 44). For an overview of male hysteria, see Jan Goldstein, “The Uses of Male Hysteria”; Elaine Showalter, *Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* 167-94; Mark Micale, *Hysterical Men*.

black hysteric Melanctha character works to reveal the productive power of racial fear as well, which prompted Stein to pathologize the African American woman, despite her racial otherness as a second-generation German-Jewish American.

1. A Medical Record of Hysteria

As an onetime student at the Johns Hopkins Medical School who had published two articles (in 1896 and 1898) in the prestigious *Harvard Psychological Review* during her college years at the Harvard Annex, later Radcliffe College, Stein knew a great deal about the psychopathological theories of hysteria and other female maladies. The Harvard professor William James was intrigued by the theories of hysteria offered by prominent French psychologists Alfred Binet and Pierre Janet. Taking James' psychological laboratory class and yearlong seminar on "consciousness, knowledge, and the relation of mind and body" during her junior year and reading his essay, "The Hidden Self" (1890) (a review of Janet's book *De l'automatisme psychologique* [1889]), and *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), Stein would have become familiar with the French theories of hysteria as a kind of attention deficit disorder (Bridgman 21; Wineapple 104-105). Correspondence between 1893 and 1896 with her sister-in-law Sally Stein (née Samuels), who underwent the rest cure, spending two weeks in bed subjected to uterine and abdominal massage, and who once wrote about her doctor's consideration of removing the ovaries as the final step of treatment of his hysterical patient, demonstrates as well young Stein's first-hand acquaintance with the late

nineteenth-century American practice of gynecology and the status of hysteria as a quintessential female malady (Wagner-Martin 38-39).

Written jointly with her lab partner Leon M. Solomons, Stein's 1896 article "Normal Motor Automatism" starts off by introducing hysterical subjects who were believed to develop subconscious lives, creating the phenomenon known as double personality (492).⁷ Based on the experiments on the relationship between attention and behavior conducted under the direction of Hugo Münsterberg, Stein and Solomons, stressing the power of automatic movements, concluded that hysteria is "a disease of the attention," an inability to attend to the sensation, and that the second personality is simply the natural correlate of a hysterical anesthesia ("Normal" 511). In her 1898 article "Cultivated Motor Automatism: A Study of Character in Its Relation to Attention," in which she continued the investigation of attention and distinguished two types of people according to the way their minds responded to the stimuli, Stein again appropriated the concept of hysteria to exemplify what she called "Type II," which consists of

the individuals, often blonde and pale, [who] are distinctly phlegmatic. If emotional, decidedly of a weakish sentimental order. They may be either large, healthy, rather heavy and lacking in vigor, or they may be what we call anaemic and phlegmatic. Their power of concentrated attention is very small. They describe themselves as never being held by their work;

⁷ Although Gertrude Stein was credited as coauthor, the essay "Normal Motor Automatism" had been written entirely by Leon M. Solomons. In fact, it had been Solomons's project and Stein had only assisted him, serving as one of the two "normal" subjects of the experiment; the other self-proclaimed normal subject was, of course, Solomons (Meyer 255).

they say that their minds wander easily; that they work on after they are tired and just keep pegging away. ... They are often fatalistic in their ideas. They indulge in day-dreams, but not those of a very stirring nature. As a rule they don't seem to have *bad* tempers—are rather sullen. Many of them are hopelessly self-conscious and rather morbid. ... It will readily be seen that this last type is much nearer the common one described in books on hysteria. (297-98)⁸

Designating Type II as a group of people whose “minds wander easily” because of their lack of “concentrated attention,” Stein attributed a wandering mind to the representative characteristics of a hysteric and later created a hysterical heroine as a wandering woman, a woman who literally wanders, in her first published literary work (“Cultivated” 298).

⁸ Stein's definition of Type II is almost identical with James's (and Janet's) diagnosis of a hysteric psychosis in “The Hidden Self”:

The attention [of a hysteric] has not sufficient strength to take in the normal number of sensations of ideas at once. If an ordinary person can feel ten things at a time, an [sic] hysteric can feel but five. Our minds are all of them like vessels full of water, and taking in a new drop makes another drop fall out; only the hysteric mental vessel is preternaturally small. (James 363-64)

It should be pointed out that the way she outlined different character types from the observation of more than a hundred Harvard and Radcliffe students' responses in automatic writing according to the premise that “habits of attention are reflexes of the complete character of the individual” is arbitrary and oversimplified (Stein, “Cultivated” 299). Lacking scientific “knowledge” in today's perspective, the boundary between Type I, those who were “nervous, high strung, very imaginative, [and] ha[d] the capacity to be easily and intensely interested,” and Type II has blurred out (Stein, “Cultivated” 297). For a detailed examination of Gertrude Stein's two essays on automatic writing and their relationship with James's interest in the theories of attention and the experience of self and with Stein's investigation of “American” characters in her work, see Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* 260-76; Steven Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* 209-89. Lisa Ruddick's *Reading Gertrude Stein: Body, Text, Gnosis* and Mark Niemeyer's “Hysteria and the Normal Unconsciousness: Dual Natures in Gertrude Stein's ‘Melantha’” analyze Stein's use of Jamesian concepts such as “double consciousness” or the “two personalities” in the characterization of the hysteric Melantha, yet pay scant attention to the modern clinical, pathological and ideological view of hysteria, one of the topics into which this chapter will delve.

In “Melanctha” the heroine often walks aimlessly “in the streets and in dark corners to discover men and to learn their natures” (*TL* 67). She “liked to wander, and to stand by the railroad yard, and watch the men and the engines and the switches and everything that was busy there, working” (*TL* 68).

Often she was alone, sometimes she was with a fellow seeker, and she strayed and stood, sometimes by railroad yards, sometimes on the docks or around new buildings where many men were working. Then when the darkness covered everything all over, she would begin to learn to know this man or that. She would advance, they would respond, and then she would withdraw a little, dimly, and always she did not know what it was that really held her. Sometimes she would almost go over, and then the strength in her of not really knowing, would stop the average man in his endeavor. It was a strange experience of ignorance and power and desire. Melanctha did not know what it was that she so badly wanted. She was afraid, and yet she did not understand that here she really was a coward. (*TL* 67)

Melanctha’s wandering in search of men dramatizes her reckless immersion in the senses that embodies her as an instinctual, inscrutable and unreliable black woman. It is also “a strange experience of ignorance and power and desire” (*TL* 67), in which she learns how to “get excitements” and seeks after “wisdom,” “world knowledge” and “freedom”—virtues that are not mere euphemisms for her search for sexual experience and experimentation (*TL* 67-68, 106). From “[o]ne, big, serious, melancholy, light brown

porter” she meets in the railroad, for instance, she learns “how the white men in the far South tried to kill him,” a lesson about a world imbued with racial tensions (*TL* 69).

With “a strong respect for any kind of successful power,” Melanctha therefore makes a series of transitions in her interest in men, from black working-class men to white “clerk[s]” or “shipping agent[s]” and then to white “men in business, commercial travelers, and even men above these,” transitions that demonstrate her acquiescence to (white) patriarchal values (*TL* 67, 71, 73).

Melanctha’s wandering in pursuit of (white) masculine power, on the other hand, suggests her burgeoning femininity shaped, according to Freud, when a little girl, renouncing penis-envy, “accepts castration as an accomplished fact ... as a ground for inferiority” and desires nothing more than to take her mother’s place and to “receive a baby from her father as a gift—to bear him a child” (*SE* 19: 178-79). This explains in part why “Melanctha Herbert almost always hated her black father, but also loved very well the power in herself that came through him,” and why “her feeling was really closer to her black coarse father than her feeling had ever been toward her pale yellow, sweet-appearing mother” (*TL* 63). Melanctha “always loved to be with horses, ... to ride the horses and to break and tame them” (*TL* 63) and later took up with “buck” Jem Richards “who had to do with fine horse” (*TL* 154). Horses were commonly related to the phallus in contemporary psychological discourse, for example, as in Freud’s case of Little Hans, in which a young boy developed equinophobia being “connected with his having been frightened by a large penis” (*SE* 10: 22). Melanctha’s love for horses thus can be explained as an instance of her sublimated penis-envy, that is, her femininity. From this

perspective, we can consider “the things she had in her of her mother [which] never made her feel respect” as the female genitals, an anatomical sign of the alleged female inferiority, which consequently compels Melanctha to keep away from her mother, a rival in the Oedipus model (*TL* 63). The construction of femininity, as Juliet Mitchell points out, is not far from the formation of hysteria, “the daughter’s disease,” contracted when she is in awe of and dazzled by the power (the penis) of a father/husband (308).⁹ Just as femininity is the product of an alleged female inferiority, so hysteria was the malignant invention of men who were afraid of their wives’ and daughters’ immoderate desire for sexuality and power. Wandering literally in the streets and in dark corners, Melanctha, in this sense, reenacts the female hysteric’s problematic wandering mind.

Melanctha’s friend and the second wandering partner Rose Johnson tells her husband Sam Johnson late in the story that the heroine’s father James Herbert “certainly was an awful black man to her, ... acting always just like a brute to her and she so game and never to tell anybody how it hurt her” (*TL* 151). No clue that explicitly alludes to the incestuous abuse Melanctha suffered at the hands of her father is found in Rose’s statements. Yet as Lisa Ruddick indicates, “a disturbing vagueness” in Rose’s words that repeatedly mention James’s awfulness and Melanctha’s reticence to talk about her sufferings, allows us to suspect the black patriarch’s sexual desire lurking behind his interest in his daughter (47). Similarly, we may reasonably assume that, when Stein describes “a decent, pleasant, good natured, light brown negro” John the coachman who

⁹ See Juan-David Nasio’s *Hysteria from Freud to Lacan: The Splendid Child of Psychoanalysis* 39-74 for a good overview of the castration anxiety or the visual fantasy of castration as the unconscious origin of female hysteria.

“liked Melanctha very well and ... always let her do anything she wanted with the horses,” she implies that—considering the Freudian connection between horse and penis mentioned above—he is a malevolent father-figure who molests Melanctha (*TL* 63-64). Given that neurologists and psychiatrists often considered the traumatic sexual encounter a girl had in her teens as the etiology of hysteria, Melanctha’s possibly incestuous relationship with a father or a father-figure materializes the Oedipal reading of femininity and constitutes the second trait of her hysteria (Freud, *SE* 7: 170-71).¹⁰

Indeed, the foremost neurologist of late nineteenth century France Jean-Martin Charcot’s hysterical star at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, a fifteen-year-old girl named Augustine (whose real name was Blanche Wittmann, and who was known as “the queen of the hysterics”), began suffering from hysterical attacks when she was raped by her employer, a man who was also her mother’s lover.¹¹ Freud and Josef Breuer also provided varied cases of hysterical women with traumatic sexual encounters with father-figures in their collaboration, *Studies on Hysteria* (1893-95), a book written under the influence of Charcot, Alfred Binet, Joseph Delboeuf, and other earlier pioneers of hysteria. Particularly, Freud’s fourth case subject in this book, the eighteen-year-old girl

¹⁰ In this sense, the razor fighting between James and John, whose sharp razors flash as Melanctha’s father senses that John feels “strongly Melanctha’s power as a woman” and admires “the virtues and the sweetness of Melanctha,” is symbolically significant, for it records the moment when her female sexuality is being violated in a patriarchal culture as soon as it comes on the stage as the object of the male gaze (*TL* 63-66). The “dirty” cut on James’s shoulder and body resulting from the two sexually charged black men’s bloody fight, I thus argue, alludes to the cut or lack innately inscribed in Melanctha’s femininity.

¹¹ Stein must have become familiar with Charcot’s case studies of hysterical women through the works of Pierre Janet, the disciple of Charcot, she had studied in the classes and books of William James and Hugo Münsterberg. For Augustine’s case, see, e.g., Elaine Showalter, *Female Malady* 147-54; Dianne Hunter, “Hysteria, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism: The Case of Anna O.” 481; Asti Hustvedt, *Medical Muses: Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century Paris* 143-212.

Katharina's hysteria, is traced back both to her childhood witness to the sexual intercourse between her father and the maid Franziska and to sexual molestation she received from her father when she waited on table at her mother's inn at the age of fourteen (*SE* 2: 125-34).¹²

Likewise, Freud's well-known hysteric Dora (whose real name was Ida Bauer) was seduced, when she was only fourteen, by Herr K., a friend of her father. Seeing her as a sexual substitute for a frigid wife who was having an affair with Dora's father, Herr K. "clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss upon her lips" on the staircase of his office (*SE* 7: 28). According to Freud, Dora exhibited a strong emotional attachment to her father, an incestuous desire hidden behind her empathies for her mother and Frau K. (*SE* 7: 56-63). As her father took sides against her, construing Herr K.'s illicit advance to her daughter as something she imagined or projected onto him, Dora felt "she had been handed over to Herr K. as the price of his tolerating the relations between her father and his wife" and, as a consequence, unleashed hysterical symptoms such as depression,

¹² While Freud depicted Katharina as being molested by her uncle, he corrected the historical record by "reveal[ing] the fact that Katharina was not the niece but the daughter of the landlady" and that "the girl fell ill, therefore, as a result of sexual attempts on the part of her own father" in a footnote added in 1924 (*SE* 2: 134). Freud's first case of *Studies on Hysteria*, Frau Emmy Von N., married a wealthy, "extremely gifted and able man" who died of a stroke shortly after marriage and subsequently developed a hysterical symptom, in which she imagined she was being persecuted by her (husband's) family. By noting that she was brought up "under strict discipline by an overenergetic and severe mother" and that her husband "was much older than she was," Freud suggested obliquely the arranged nature of their marriage and, therefore, the close relationship between hysteria and sexual encounter with a father-figure (*SE* 2: 50, 87). The third case describes the young Englishwoman Miss Lucy R, a governess who was in love with her employer, a widowed rich man, another father-figure, while taking care of his orphaned children, and whose hysterical symptom was the loss of the sense of smell accompanied by a persistent imaginary smell of burnt pudding (*SE* 2: 117-18).

dyspnoea and aphonia (*SE* 7: 34).¹³ Although Freud's name does not appear in Stein's notebooks and it was not until 1909 when Stein's brother Leo first read Freud and recommended his work to his sister, there is a possibility that she had enough first-hand knowledge of Freud and his case studies of hysterical women, aligning her unique psychological vision with Freud's theory (Mellow 35; Ruddick 94). In 1894 William James took a notice of "one of the first articles by Freud and Breuer, on hysteria," which later made up their *Studies on Hysteria* (Sutherland 2). As a disciple of James and medical student whose specialty had been women's diseases Stein must have known Freud and Breuer's work and may have consulted its case studies and, possibly, Dora's case as a model for her creation of hysteric Melanctha.¹⁴

Without having a chance to consult with able doctors like Freud and Charcot, Melanctha stubbornly refuses to tell readers how she suffered from childhood experience.

It was never Melanctha's way, even in the midst of her worst trouble to complain to any one of what happened to her, but nevertheless somehow

¹³ Undermining Dora's abhorrence at Herr K.'s sexual advancement, however, Freud made a conjecture that she was "guilty of exaggeration" in envisioning herself as a victim and that she was not sexually innocent—an idea that confirms the premise that excessive sexual desire and knowledge are the preconditions of hysteria. So he wrote, "where there is no knowledge of sexual processes even in the unconscious, no hysterical symptom will arise; and where hysteria is found there can no longer be any question of 'innocence of mind' in the sense in which parents and educators use the phrase" (*SE* 7: 49).

¹⁴ That Leo first came across Freud's name in a book by Münsterberg also leads me to speculate that Stein was aware of his theory while she was writing "Melanctha" and thus to pinpoint the psychopathological studies about hysterical women as its background text. Gertrude and Leo were enthusiastic, or at least curious in the case of Gertrude, about the works of the Viennese psychoanalyst, and she privately acknowledged that Freud was a stage one must go through (Wineapple 316). Although she would eventually dismiss Freud with the declaration that "Gertrude Stein never had subconscious reactions" in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), the repudiation of Freudian theory seems to be a part of her signature self-mythologizing rhetoric (79).

every one who knew Melanctha always knew how much she suffered. It was only while one really loved Melanctha that one understood how to forgive her, that she never once complained nor looked unhappy, and was always handsome and in spirits, and yet one always knew how much she suffered.

The father, James Herbert, never told his troubles either, and he was so fierce and serious that no one ever thought of asking.

‘Mis’ Herbert as her neighbors called her was never heard even to speak of her husband or her daughter. (*TL* 64-65)

We only know “how much she suffered.” From the fact that James “never told his troubles” and ‘Mis’ Herbert simply turns her face away from the sufferings of her daughter and husband, however, we can assume that Melanctha’s difficulties are related to her father’s “troubles.” Melanctha makes an effort to repress her early traumatic experiences throughout the story, and Stein describes the heroine’s efforts in a highly figurative manner by adopting the stereotypical sexually impulsive and “feminine” traits of hysteria.

Melanctha Herbert always loved too hard and much too often. She was always full with mystery and subtle movements and denials and vague distrusts and complicated disillusion. Then Melanctha would be sudden and impulsive and unbounded in some faith, and then she would suffer and be strong in her repression. (*TL* 62)

Melantha “always talk[s] like she kill herself all the time she is so blue” (*TL* 162). Manifested often in suicidal impulses, her “fatalistic” disposition—an expression Stein proposed as a characteristic of the “hysterical” Type II in her earlier psychological essay quoted above—constitutes the most conspicuous symptom of hysteria. Here it should be pointed out that Melantha’s “fatalistic” personality is always intimated to readers through the voices of others, particularly by Rose Johnson who retorts, “I don’t see Melantha why you should talk like you would kill yourself just because you’re blue. I’d never kill myself Melantha cause I was blue. I’d maybe kill somebody else but I’d never kill myself” (*TL* 161). Melantha nonetheless “never really killed herself because she was so blue” in the end, meaning that her depression itself is a form of “acting-out” behavior (*TL* 167). Her first boyfriend Jeff Campbell unwittingly yet discerningly identifies Melantha’s histrionics, telling her that “you certainly ain’t got no right always to be using your being hurt and being sick, and having pain, like a weapon, so as to make me do things it ain’t never right for me to be doing for you. ... You *act* always” (*TL* 122; emphasis added). Melantha’s attitude toward the second boyfriend Jem likewise reveals her “acting” nature, as Rose states, “I don’t never like the way any more Melantha is *acting* to him [Jem]. ... She ain’t never real right honest” (*TL* 162; emphasis added).

Since hysteria, as Ulrich Baer remarks in his essay “Photography and Hysteria: Toward a Poetics of the Flash,” “had always been associated with masking, histrionics, deception, and imitation” (42), the theatricality permeating Melantha’s depression marks the third trait of her hysteria. Fin-de-siècle hysteria could be diagnosed only when made visible with the help of modern technologies, because patients usually babbled and

their bodily gestures observed during hysterical seizures were considered as the only valid pathological signs.¹⁵ In this sense, Melanctha's histrionic repetition of certain words and phrases, which was hitherto seen as the epitome of Stein's experimental writing, can be said to illustrate hysteric girls' babble that, according to the French anatomist and the disciple of Charcot at the Salpêtrière, Paul Richer, "automatically repeat[s] certain words" (qtd. in Väliaho 71). The theatrical symptoms of female hysteria exhibited at Charcot's popular public lecture indeed constituted "a spectacular show" involving three phases of a full hysterical seizure: "the epileptoid phrase, in which the woman lost consciousness and foamed at the mouth," "the phase of clownism, involving eccentric physical contortions," and "the phase of *attitudes passionnelles*, a miming of incidents and emotions from the patient's life" (Showalter 148-50).¹⁶ (See figure 2) Charcot's extensive use of photography to "exteriorize, make visible, and arrest the hysterical symptom in a way that would allow for a clean separation between this symptom and the patient's alleged intention" also attested to the hysteric's signature histrionics and "affinity for masks and makeup" (Baer 45).

Melanctha's histrionic performance exhibited in her heterosexual relationships with Jeff and Jem also works to mask her veiled lesbian experimentation which, as the fourth trait of her hysteria, characterizes her as a rebellious hysterical woman. Using extremely vague and figurative language, Stein masked the homosexual tie binding

¹⁵ See Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* 140-45.

¹⁶ See Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria* 118-21, which, adding the fourth phrase of delirium, provides Richer's "synoptic table of the 'complete and regular great hysterical attack,' with typical positions and their 'variants.'"

Melantha to her first wandering partner Jane, possibly in order not to straightly deal with the controversial issue, as well as not to hint at her lesbian identity.



Planche XXIII

ATTITUDES PASSIONNELLES

EXTASE 1878).



Planche XXXVI.

ATTAQUE : CRUCIFIEMENT

Figure 2. Photographies of Jean-Martin Charcot's Augustine performing the theatrical symptoms of hysteria, Désiré-Magloire Bourneville and Paul Regnar, *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, Vol. II (1878).

In fact, she had treated this issue in her second extant novel *Q.E.D.* (“Quod Erat Demonstrandum”; 1903), posthumously published in a limited edition as *Things as They Are* in 1950, by forthrightly accounting for her first lesbian affair with May Bookstaver, who she met while at medical school. In “Melanctha,” however, Stein recast Adele, the character modeled after the author herself, as a male black doctor Jeff, transforming *Q.E.D.*’s homosexual triangle among three “college bred American women of the wealthier class,” Adele, Helen Thomas, and Mabel Neathe—a relationship inspired by the love affair involving Gertrude, May, and Mabel Haynes—into a legitimate, publishable heterosexual love story (*QED* 54). Although being relocated from the center of the narrative, however, a trace of lesbianism still survives in “Melanctha,” particularly in Melanctha’s erotically cathected relationship with the college-educated middle-class black woman Jane Harden, which begins and continues in the midst of wandering.

In the first year, between Jane Harden and Melanctha Herbert, Jane had been much the stronger. Jane loved Melanctha and she found her always intelligent and brave and sweet and docile, and Jane meant to, and before the year was over she had taught Melanctha what it is that gives many people in the world their wisdom.

Jane had many ways in which to do this teaching. She told Melanctha many things. She loved Melanctha hard and made Melanctha feel it very deeply. She would be with other people and with men and with Melanctha, and she would make Melanctha understand what everybody wanted, and what one did with power when one had it.

Melantha sat at Jane's feet for many hours in these days and felt Jane's wisdom. She learned to love Jane and to have this feeling very deeply. She learned a little in these days to know joy, and she was taught too how very keenly she could suffer. It was very different this suffering from that Melantha sometimes had from her mother and from her very unendurable black father. Then she was fighting and she could be strong and valiant in her suffering, but here with Jane Harden she was longing and she bent and pleaded with her suffering. (*TL* 74)

Female bisexuality was inextricably linked to hysteria, which, "with its malingering invalidism, tantrums and willfulness, was the 19th-century woman's protest against confinement in the home-sweet-home of bourgeois industrialist capitalism" (Mitchell, *Women* 117-18).¹⁷ Indeed, some women, aspiring to professional independence and sexual freedom, adopted lesbian identities and behaviors conceived by contemporary physicians as one of the hysterical symptoms in order to express dissatisfaction with aspects of their lives and avoid feminine duties (Smith-Rosenberg 208-10). By simultaneously exaggerating and refuting the stereotypes of female nature, she exploited hysteria as "a weapon in her battle with her dominating husband" (*SE* 16: 383). Hence Freud condemned women's feigned hysteria as "an act of moral cowardice" in *Studies on Hysteria*: "the mechanism which produces hysteria represents on the one hand an act of moral cowardice and on the other a defensive measure which is at the

¹⁷ For the connection between female bisexuality and hysteria, see, for example, Freud's 1908 essay, "Hysterical Phantasies and Their Relation to Bisexuality," *The Standard Edition* 9: 159-66.

disposal of the ego. Often enough we have to admit that fending off increasing excitations by the generation of hysteria is, in the circumstances, the most expedient thing to do" (*SE* 2: 123). If hysteria was "a defensive measure" operating in terms of woman's troubled relationship to what has generally been regarded as masculinity, lesbianism was "the most expedient thing" women could "adopt" as the symptom of hysteria, that is, as "a weapon in her battle with" the patriarchal order. Accordingly, Melanctha's veiled homosexual relationship with Jane further confirms her as a hysteric, foreshadowing her death in a sanatorium, the most realistic scenario for a rebellious woman in her time.

2. Nervousness and Skin Hierarchy

At first glimpse, Stein's portrayal of the black "hysterical" woman and her lonely death reveals the author's endorsement of a set of misogynist stereotypes intrinsic to the psychopathology of hysteria and its underlying male anxiety about female desire. Yet given the racist overtone of the discourse of hysteria, as will be discussed below, the "black" hysterical Melanctha emerges as an intriguing, controversial and complicated character that also demonstrates Stein's racial, if not racist, ideas, controversial topic for all Steinian critics. There are indeed conflicting views about whether Stein embraced the prevalent racist beliefs of her time in "Melanctha," particularly in the treatment of black people as a sexual, primitive, and aggressive race.

On the one hand, works of modernist and feminist criticism have interpreted Stein's reproduction of racist portraits of her African American characters, such as her

descriptions of “a powerful, loose built, hard handed, black, angry negro” (TL 64) and “a real black, tall, well built, sullen, stupid, childlike, good looking negress” (TL 59), or her comments about the “simple, promiscuous unmorality of the black people” (TL 60), as instances of her experimental textual strategies that reinvent literary form and question and reconfigure our experience of fiction. Michael North places the novella in the context of traditions of racial masquerade and ventriloquism by surmising that through the racial clichés and caricatures “[p]erhaps Stein ... invites her predominantly white readership to identify with the characters and thus play a black role,” arguing further that, “presenting race *as* a role seems an open invitation to consider it as culturally constituted and perhaps to consider gender a role as well” (70). Laura Doyle goes further by assuming that Stein’s repetitive racial slurs “are calculated to offend” and “echo the audience’s racism in a way that makes readers squirm” for the purpose of “calling her audience out of its ideological closets” and “identif[ying] a deep link between the economies of racism and sexism, one that depends on the interlocking structures of repetition and heterosexual reproduction” (263). Pointing out that Stein described her own sensual nature as “dirty” in her notebook, Linda Wagner-Martin considers the stereotypical black people in “Melantha” as a form of authorial portraiture, concluding that “Gertrude’s identification with the character of Melantha mitigates what seems to be racism in the text” (80).¹⁸ As North’s repeated use of the word

¹⁸ The following books and essays, to name a few, represent the modernist and feminist approach to Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives*, sharing the view with Linda Wagner-Martin, Michael North, and Laura Doyle: Howard Greenfield. *Gertrude Stein: A Biography*; Marianne DeKoven. *A Different Language: Gertrude Stein’s Experimental Writing*; Jayne Walker. *The Making of a Modernist: Gertrude Stein from Three Lives to Tender Buttons* 19-41; Milton Cohen. “Black Brutes and

“perhaps” in the above quotation suggests, however, these interpretative efforts to save Stein from the charge of racism in the name of modernist/feminist textual readings are likely to be the critics’ reactionary wish-fulfillment, coupled with a selective (in)attention to biographical and archival resources explicitly testifying to the writer’s racial prejudice.

On the other hand, critics like Sonia Saldivar-Hull simply contend that Stein’s stereotyped racial slurs in “Melanctha” are indubitable tokens of her blatant racial bias. Summing up the history of white modernist/feminist critics’ curious and disturbing blindness about it, she remonstrates that “when we as feminist critics accept blatant slurs like the claim that black people speak with a ‘childlike vocabulary,’ when we do not question Steinian images of ‘negro sunshine’ or assumptions of the ‘simple promiscuous unmorality of the black people,’ we are lulled and mesmerized by Stein’s cadence and repetitions. Perhaps this is Stein’s political agenda” (189). Debunking the common myth that considered Stein’s notorious racist expressions as only a function of aesthetic categories, Saldivar-Hull discloses the author’s political consciousness hidden behind the stylistic excess and concludes her essay gravely with the statement that “we are killing the dignity of women of color and working-class women when we continue to promote authors like Gertrude Stein without acknowledging their race and class prejudice” (194). In a similar vein, Jaime Hovey maintains that white feminist critics’ vindications of Stein derive from their eager desire “to celebrate once-silenced white

Mulatto Saints: The Racial Hierarchy of Stein’s “Melanctha””; Kate Fullbrook. *Free Women: Ethics and Aesthetics in 20th-Century Women’s Fiction* 57-80. Despite the (seemingly) racially critical title of Cohen’s article, he argues that Stein “merely incorporated these racial stereotypes unthinkingly into her real concern with character and consciousness” (121).

female—and especially lesbian—writers as progressive foremothers,” which therefore provoked them to exercise “a measure of ‘unknowing’ concerning racial stereotypes in Gertrude Stein’s early writing, allowing her a certain freedom from accountability” (547). Hovey warns readers of the danger of such an interpretative trend by appropriating the term “unknowing” that Eve Sedgwick used to assert the danger of the structures of “powerful unknowing” of the homosexual closet which can collude or compete with “organizing knowledges that help to structure or buttress oppression” (547).

Racial stereotypes underlie, then supersede, “Melanctha.” It is not surprising that a young American woman who wrote at a specific time in a particular culture incorporated conventional social prejudices of her place and time into her story.¹⁹ Given that the label “black hysterical woman” is, in fact, a sort of medical oxymoron,

¹⁹ Shortly after completing *Three Lives* in 1906, the thirty-two-year-old young writer, disappointed by repeated rejections from publishers and agents and by her brother Leo’s noncommittal yet harsh critique of her manuscript, wrote a letter to her friend Mabel Weeks, a letter which has been often quoted as evidence of her racism:

I am afraid that I can never write the great American novel. I don’t know how to sell on a margin or do anything with shorts or longs, so I have to content with myself with niggers and servant girls and foreign population generally. ... Dey is very simple and very vulgar and I don’t think they will interest the great American public. (qtd. in Mellow 77)

By attributing *Three Lives*’s lack of “art,” the lack of “any Tschaikowsky Pathetique or Omar Kayam or Wagner or Whistler or White Man’s Burden,” to the lax morals and coarseness of its black and immigrant characters, Stein accepted the prevalent racial prejudice against “niggers and servant girls and foreign population” who were not a part of “the great American public” (qtd. in Mellow 77). It is no coincidence that “The White Man’s Burden,” Rudyard Kipling’s 1899 hymn to British imperialism and white supremacy, was chosen by her as one of the instances of “art.” There seems to be a tacit agreement that the claims of race were incompatible with those of sex for white middle-class American women of Stein’s time. Even the most prominent feminist leaders like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, when they turned their attention to racial issues, often exhibited racism. Supporting Anglo-Saxon American women’s push toward full equality in her 1904 speech, for instance, Gilman announced that the negro race was not yet completely civilized and therefore “it was best for the negro woman to remain at home” (qtd. in Bederman 146).

according to the mainstream turn-of-the-century American pathology that linked nervousness exclusively with “whiteness,” however, the character of Melanctha provides a new vantage point to investigate the nature of Stein’s racial ideas. Black people were commonly believed to be unaffected by nervous diseases, as in the case of Julian West’s “forgotten” black servant Sawyer. As discussed in Chapter II, neurasthenia was often designated as a price for progress exacted by industrialized urban societies, competitive business, and the vices and excesses of modern life that only upper-middle-class native-born white Americans had to pay. Disguised with medical jargon, the medical discourse of neurasthenia was a staple of commentary about how threatened Anglo-Saxon American men were in the face of the changing demographic and geographic composition of the late nineteenth-century United States. Sharing a common genealogy and cultural significance, however, neurasthenia and hysteria were not “sufficiently well-defined that in retrospect one could insist that there were differences that mattered” (Briggs 268). There were indeed many American physicians who claimed the interchangeability of these illnesses by arguing that hysteria developed out of severe neurasthenia, or that neurasthenia represented a variety of hysteria. Hence Morton Prince, a prominent American physician and neurologist, suggested in 1898, after hearing that Harvard Medical School challenged its students to differentiate the two in an examination question, that drawing a sharp line between neurasthenia and hysteria was almost an impossible task (Schuster 5).

Yet some parts of the medical community struggled to differentiate the two intertwined yet independent types of nervous illness for much of the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries. Even the famed Mitchell decided to hedge diagnoses when he re-subtitled his otherwise successful book *Fat and Blood* as “An Essay on the Treatment of Certain Forms of Neurasthenia and Hysteria” (Schuster 5). David G. Schuster in his recent book *Neurasthenic Nation: America’s Search for Health, Happiness, and Comfort, 1869-1920* ventures to differentiate neurasthenia from hysteria, stating that “neurasthenia possessed a certain American flavor, compared to hysteria’s European quality, in large part because the United States stood at the center of neurasthenia research during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries while Europe led in studies on hysteria” (5). While hysteria held the most significant position in the ideology and practice of nineteenth-century European psychiatry as an equivalent to nervous disorder, it played a subsidiary role to the discourse of neurasthenia in the United States. The existence of significant numbers of male nerve patients who were believed to deplete their nerve energy, including Edward Bellamy and his hero Julian West, forced American nerve specialists to invent an acceptable and even an impressive illness for white men, because these patients must not be diagnosed as suffering from hysteria, “the daughter’s disease.” Thus, they created a disease called neurasthenia, “an American nervousness,” to which privileged white, particularly Anglo-Saxon American men were liable.

George M. Beard speculated that this disease was yet “found in great abundance in both sexes, and in both men and women of intellect, education, and well-balanced mental organizations” (*Practical* 137). Despite the symptomatic similarity between the two sexes’ nervous exhaustion, however, they were etiologically distinguished from

each other, as Gail Bederman explains: “Whereas men became neurasthenics because the mental labors of advanced civilization drained them of the nervous energy necessary to build a strong, masculine body, women became neurasthenics when they tried to combine their normal function—motherhood—with the masculine, enervating intellectual demands of modern civilization” (130). This etiological disparity between two sexes necessarily yields different remedies for the same disease. While a neurasthenic man should leave the city for nature and then “must be returned to the civilized functions of the *race*,” a neurasthenic woman should be treated by the rest cure and “must recognize her biological limitation as a member of ‘the *sex*’ and return to woman’s sphere” (Bederman 130-1; Lutz 77-84).

To complicate things further, the existence of patients of color suffering from neurasthenic symptoms brought forth a need for an additional disease that complemented the racialized notion of neurasthenia. For physicians at work on the difference between neurasthenia and hysteria the latter was commonly believed to be a gender-specified disease with varying causes and symptoms. Thus, they chose hysteria to meet this need. Diagnosed as a mental illness of the sexually inferior (woman), regardless of her race, hysteria filled the lacuna of their racist-cum-misogynist pathological system, setting the boundary of privileged realms that affirmed American men’s superiority over other races as well as over “educated” women from their own race. In short, race trumps sex both in the neurasthenic discourse that included white female patients and in the hysterical discourse that allowed black female patients into its realm.

In his 1880 book, *A Practical Treatise on Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia)*, Beard did not define hysteria solely as a white female malady but as a disease of black people, immigrants, and other inferior races regardless of their sex. It suggests that the discourse of hysteria was concerned, at least in the United States, with race as much as with sex.

In hysteria there are some of the symptoms, besides the paroxysms, an acuteness, violence, activity, and severity that do not belong to simple neurasthenia.

Hysteria is found usually in those whose emotional natures greatly predominate. Hence, relatively to neurasthenia, it is far more common in females than in males. Indeed, hysteria was once supposed to be exclusively a disease of women; hence its name. Neurasthenia, on the other hand, although more frequent in women, is yet found in great abundance in both sexes, and in both men and women of intellect, education, and well-balanced mental organizations.

Hysteria of the mental or physical form may occur in those who are in perfect physical health, without any of the symptoms of neurasthenia or of anaemia; those of the strongest possible constitutions are the victims of this type of hysteria, the subjective psychological cause of which is an excess of emotion over intellect, acted upon by any influence that tends to produce emotional excitation. This form of hysteria is found in the stout Irish servant girls, among the Southern

negroes, and among the undisciplined and weak-minded of all races and classes and ages, and, unlike neurasthenia, was more prevalent in the middle ages than in the nineteenth century. (Beard, *Practical* 137)

While the symptomatic differences between neurasthenia and hysteria are far from being marked here, Beard spilled much ink on their etiological differences, stating that “it is only a minority of the cases of hysteria and hystero-epilepsy that have first passed through the stage of neurasthenia” (Beard, *Practical* 164). “Both hysteria and hystero-epilepsy,” he continued, “may arise in persons who have not been especially nervously exhausted, but whose mental organization is weak and ill-trained, and who, consequently, fall into the symptoms of these disorders through needless apprehension or worry, or, perchance, catch them through psychical contagion” (Beard, *Practical* 164). Because for Beard the “weak and ill-trained” mentality of certain patients has something to do with their race and ethnicity along with gender, hysteria was defined also as a disease of colored people such as “the stout Irish servant girls,” “the Southern negroes” and “the undisciplined and weak-minded of all races and classes and ages.” Rather, it was anorexia nervosa, as Joan Jacobs Brumberg has demonstrated in her book *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa*, that was regarded as an exclusively white educated American daughter’s disease in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Beard’s delineation of hysteria as a disease of the colored, in the first place, extricates Stein’s creation of the black hysteric Melantha character from the suspicion of an oxymoronic fabrication ignorant of contemporary medical theories of nervous disease. Moreover, the fact that only those with a “pale yellow” skin—in other words,

mulattoes—are prone to wandering, an avowed sign of hysteria, whereas other “black-skinned” characters are not, makes the hysterical mulatto characters into common clinical cases conforming also with the mainstream perspective of seeing hysteria as a trait of whiteness. Melanctha is a “pale yellow” mulatto girl “half made with real white blood” (*TL* 60), and her mother, ‘Mis’ Herbert, is depicted as “sweet-appearing and dignified and pleasant, pale yellow, colored woman” who once did “a little wandering in her ways” (*TL* 62-63, 65). So is the case of Jane, Melanctha’s first wandering partner, who has “much white blood” and is not far from being a rebellious hysteric girl with “grit and endurance and a vital courage” (*TL* 73). No wonder that Jeff, who once accompanies the heroine’s wandering, is a mulatto (*TL* 76). His efforts to learn “real feeling” and “real, strong, hot love” despite his desires for “living regular” and not “get[ting] excited,” as shown in the protracted passages of dialogue with Melanctha, enacts the internal struggle of his mixed black and white bloods—the struggle between “feeling” and “thinking” (*TL* 85-87, 91): “he had loved all his life always to be thinking, but he was still only a great boy, was Jeff Campbell, and he had never before had any of this funny kind of feeling” (*TL* 96).

By using racist language only when describing “very Black” characters like James and Rose (*TL* 65), Stein established a sort of skin hierarchy—between black and white, and between black and mulatto, as Milton Cohen categorized them into “black brutes” and “mulatto saints” (119), responding to the eugenic notions of human development that viewed “pale yellow” skin as the potential for a racial evolution. Having “been brought up quite like their own child by white folks,” Rose consistently

asserts that “I ain’t no common nigger to do so, for I was raised by white folks” (*TL* 61). Stein yet depicts her repeatedly as “coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black childish Rose,” “careless and negligent and selfish” enough to let her baby die and not to “[think] about it very long” (*TL* 59-60). The portrayal of James no doubt further suggests that his “very Black” blood is the irrevocable root of all evil.

Hence the character of the “pale yellow” hysterical Melanctha not only confers verisimilitude to an otherwise medically infeasible narrative but also reaffirms Stein’s presumed acquiescence to racist stereotypes permeating the medical discourse of her time. Permitting only the mulatto characters to be sensitive enough to suffer from hysteria, she underwrote the eugenic principles of racial and biological determinism that placed blood and heredity before environment and education. Indeed, skin tone had been one of crucial taxonomic features in the character study she had been developing based on the theory of biological evolution in the psychology lab at Radcliffe. In her article “Cultivated Motor Automatism,” for example, she defined the hysteric character, Type II, by paleness, that is to say, whiteness, enumerating three cases in which each subject was “pale and physically rather weak” (301-2). (Interestingly, among the article’s three cases comprising two males and one female, Stein provided the account of the subject’s skin tone only in the cases of a male subject. This implies in a way that she assumed hysteria to be a female disease *per se*, not requiring further supporting details about the female patient’s skin color.) In other words, the “pale yellow” skin of the mulattoes is a trace of white blood in their black bodies that makes them qualified to play a complex, ambivalent, and hysterical role in “Melanctha.”

The hysterization of the mulatto characters further complements the classification function of mulattoization by endowing them with “double personality,” the late-nineteenth-century European equation of hysteria, which served as a complex metaphor for the superiority of the white race as delineated in Stein’s *Harvard Psychological Review* articles. The hysterical mulattoes in “Melanctha” figuratively embody, in a sense, what W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* dubbed “double consciousness,” the psycho-social tension of an African American who always looks “at oneself through the eyes of others” and measures “one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (45). As in Stein’s case, William James’s works on “alternating selves” and “primary and secondary consciousness” stimulated Du Bois’s thinking about race and identity during his Harvard years and compelled him to develop a psychological explanation of African-American identity in terms of nervous disorder, envisioning double consciousness as a racial dynamic peculiar to blacks (Wonham 128-29). In this context, Melanctha’s identity conflict in terms of race and gender prefigures the “twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unrecoiled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body”—explored by Du Bois (Du Bois 45). The “twoness” implies that all African Americans are in the situation of the mulatto. The double consciousness gives rise to “a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence” (Du Bois 221), which, according to Tom Lutz, altogether define blacks as essentially nervous, neurasthenic people (264). As examined in Chapter II, nervousness is not a negative marker in the neurasthenical understanding. It signals the potential sensitiveness,

ambivalence, civility and refinement of black people, foreshadowing the possibility of their two souls' compromise and subsequent racial development. Lutz thus concludes that "Du Bois is culturally enfranchising blacks by claiming that they are all, in effect, neurasthenic" (264). In this sense, built on the skin hierarchy that designates white blood as a prerequisite for racial development, the nervous mulatto Melanctha character impersonates the intrinsic double consciousness of blacks and represents the possibility of African-American achievement, an achievement, to be sure, made possible only by the guidance of whites.

3. Racial Displacement of Jewish Self-hatred

Fin-de-siècle European and American physicians were convinced that most illnesses were of organic origin and that racial degeneracy played a major role in predisposing any individual to risk. In this context, Jewishness was deemed "an illness that cannot be cured through the ministrations of medicine, for it is embedded in the very core of the Jew" (Gilman, *Case* 15). "[T]he 'diseases' are Jewish, and the Jews are 'diseased'," as the German poet Heinrich Heine wrote in his 1842 poem on the endowment of the Jewish hospital in Hamburg: "A hospital for poor, sick Jews, / for people afflicted with threefold misery, / with three evil maladies / poverty, physical pain, and Jewishness. / The last-named is the worst of all the three" (Gilman, *Case* 4; qtd. in Praver 433). Anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century was quite naturally a medical, if not epidemiological, idea which pathologized the Jewish body, placing it in a subordinate position within the discourses of classification and control. Utilizing

pseudoscience that misrecognized Jews as the potential carriers of disease and infecting members of the body politic, the medical anti-Semitism—unlike the old religious-type anti-Semitism—posed the fear of degeneration to the Gentiles and established an imaginary relationship between Jews and Gentiles which functioned to stitch up the inconsistencies of the white ideological system. As Foucault maintains in his 1975-76 lecture, *Society Must be Defended*, anti-Semitism was the representative State racism shaped “at the point when the State had to look like, function, and present itself as the guarantor of the integrity and purity of race, and had to defend it against the race or races that were infiltrating it, introducing harmful elements into its body, and which therefore had to be driven out for both political and biological reasons” (89).²⁰

Stein was in some ways an orthodox Jew who firmly believed that Jewish assimilation must not be extended to the private sphere, as she wrote in a college essay, “The Modern Jew Who Has Given Up the Faith of His Fathers Can Reasonably and Consistently Believe in Isolation” (1896):

The Jew shall marry only the Jew. ... [I]n the sacred precincts of the home, in the close union of family and of kinsfolk he must be a Jew with

²⁰ Foucault further explains the reutilization of the old religious-type anti-Semitism in the State racism as follows:

It is at this point that anti-Semitism develops, picking up, using, and taking from the old form of anti-Semitism all the energy—and a whole mythology—which had until then been devoted solely to the political analysis of the internal war, or the social war. At this point the Jews came to be seen as—and were described as—a race that was present within all races, and whose biologically dangerous character necessitated a certain number of mechanisms of rejection and exclusion on the part of the State. It is therefore, I think, the reutilization within State racism of an anti-Semitism which had developed for other reasons that generated the nineteenth-century phenomena of superimposing the old mechanisms of anti-Semitism on this critical and political analysis of the struggle between races within a single society. (*Society* 89)

Jews[;] the Gentile has no place there. On this point all are agreed, the most liberal and the most orthodox alike hold non-inter-marriage to be the sine qua non of Judaism; and justly, for inter-marriage would be the death-blow of the race. (423)

Seeing Judaism as “a race-feeling, an enlargement of the family tie,” she further claimed, “Let the Jew be true to the strongest instinct within him, that feeling that makes the most skeptical the most liberal even when asked, ‘but do you really feel yourselves to be a chosen people,’ makes even such a Jew cry out in a burst of enthusiasm ‘We are, we were and we ever shall be’” (Stein, “Modern” 426-27).²¹ Spending her teens and twenties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when anti-Semitism was escalating on both sides of the Atlantic, however, Stein had to deal intensely with her racial as well as sexual marginality.²² The anti-Semitism and sexism pervading Johns

²¹ Stein exposed her orthodox racial understanding of Jewish identity, as she filled dozens of manuscript books with notes and diagrams codifying the characteristic behaviors of Jewish and Anglo-Saxon types of people—which later developed respectively into “the dependent independent” types who “have resisting as the fighting power” and “the independent dependent” types who “have attacking as their natural way of fighting” in the epic novel, *The Making of Americans* (1903-11) (Feinstein 51-52; Stein, *Making* 192). For a discussion about Stein’s Jewishness, see Maria Damon, “Gertrude Stein’s Jewishness, Jewish Social Scientists, and the ‘Jewish Question’” and Barbara Will, “Gertrude Stein and Zionism.”

²² Stein was a sort of “orthodox” lesbian as well who committed to a lifelong relationship with a Jewish woman Alice B. Toklas, unlike May and Mabel who married well and masked their homoerotic years with what appeared to be consistently heterosexual preferences (Mellow 62; Wagner-Martin 53). As exemplified by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), who described homosexuality as a degenerative sickness originating from anomalies of the cerebral organization, which can be traced back to the embryonic and fetal stages of gestation, homosexuality had long been considered a disease (225-27). Despite Havelock Ellis and Freud’s efforts to exempt homosexuality from being a disease, alongside psychoanalysis’s radical vision of the complexity of human sexuality as a physiological, psychological, and sociological phenomenon, later psychoanalysts like Sandor Rado and Charles Socarides kept reckoning homosexuality in a pathologic manner. It was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the World Health Organization officially declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder

Hopkins, where most professors could not stand Stein's "marked Hebrew looks" and believed that women were incapable of abstract thought and thus assigned them to the time-consuming job of making brain tracts models, "an excellent occupation for women and Chinamen," was unmistakably at work in the early denouement of her medical career (Wineapple 123-24; Farland 120-27; Wagner-Martin 48-50).

Living in Baltimore for most of her twenties, particularly when she delivered babies to fulfill the requirements for the course in obstetrics, Stein made direct contact with the city's immigrant and black population, which later served as a critical source for the writing of "Melanctha." Her experiences might have confirmed for her the nineteenth-century racist link between blacks and Jews, a connection promoted by the medical texts about their immutable "difference" and their alleged characteristic diseases and illicit sexuality (Wineapple 235-37). The Jew was believed to be as distant from the Anglo-Saxon and Aryan as was the Hottentot, lying in the "lowest" rung on the *scala naturae*, the scale of perfection (Gilman, *Case* 12). Jews were the "white Negroes" perceived as parallel to the mulattoes in a racial caste system supported in part by pseudo-scientific medical beliefs, as Adam Gurowski, a Polish immigrant to America, observed in his 1857 memoirs that "numbers of Jews have the greatest resemblance to the American mulattoes" for their "[s]allow carnation complexion, thick lips, crisped black hair" and, therefore, "took every light-colored mulatto for a Jew" (qtd. in Gilman, *Difference* 31). Stein's letter to Etta Cone, dated 1904 or 1905, where she announced,

respectively in 1973, 1975 and 1990, seeing it as a normal variation of human sexual orientation. For the history of modern American psychologists' view of homosexuality before Freud, see Smith-Rosenberg 245-96; and after Freud, see Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry*.

while looking at Leo's painting of her, "it looks like me, I think it looks like a nigger," suggests her awareness of the "biological" connection between Jews and blacks (qtd. in Wineapple 235).

In addition, the alleged biological link between black female and lesbian sexuality, which connotes the sexual pathology of "primitive peoples" and the deviance of prostitution in mid- and late-nineteenth century medical discourse, further elucidates the underlying motives and intentions of the black, possibly lesbian, woman character Melanctha. The nineteenth-century German physician H. Hildebrandt associated the female Hottentot's malformed genitalia with the overdevelopment of the clitoris, which he saw as leading to those "excesses" which "are called 'lesbian love'," an association that reiterated or anticipated the historically resonant interactions between Jewishness and queerness, and between anti-Semitism and homophobia (qtd. in Gilman, *Difference* 89).²³ Not surprisingly, the nineteenth-century lists of "Jewish disease" and "homosexual disease," the categories employed both to create the image of Jews and homosexuals as infected and to mark a demasculinization of Jewish men, included hysteria as their characteristic disease with all its implications (Gilman, *Difference* 154).²⁴ Blackness, Jewishness, and homosexuality indeed formed the trinity of "difference," the powerfully

²³ For the relationship between Jewishness and queerness, see Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini, eds., *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*.

²⁴ Charcot drew attention to "the especially marked predisposition of the Jewish race for hysteria" and other kinds of mental illness regardless of sex (qtd. in Gilman, *Sexuality* 265). By the end of the nineteenth century, a male Jew was believed to be liable not to neurasthenia but to hysteria (Gilman, *Jew's Body* 62-63). In *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, quoting Tobler's 1889 study of mental disease, writes, "The Jewish population of [Warsaw] alone is almost exclusively the inexhaustible source for the supply of specimens of hysterical humanity, particularly the hysteria in the male, for all the clinics of Europe" (233).

charged relation of “chiasmus in which each term comes to gloss, illustrate, displace, transume, each other, all at one and the same time” (Freedman 335). No wonder that Stein’s obstetrics professor John Whitridge William at Johns Hopkins studied the form of the pelvis of Jews, Hottentots, and lesbians in relation to their low position on the evolutionary ladder—an issue tracing back to Charles Darwin who saw the pelvis as a primary factor in understanding the objective nature of human beauty and sexuality (Hovey 555; Darwin 2: 317).

Although “Melanctha” is centered on an ostensibly homoracial, heterosexual plot that features no explicit Jewish/homosexual overtones, the racist biology that links Jews to blacks in terms of homosexuality and hysterical disposition makes it possible to encode the racial and sexual messages in this story of a mulatto woman. In *Q.E.D.*, the archetypal text of “Melanctha,” Stein describes Adele, Helen, and Mabel’s distinctive appearance, an indicator of their racial difference, as a key to understanding their ill-fated relationship. Announcing that “[t]heir appearance, their attitudes and their talk both as to manner and to matter showed the influence of different localities, different forebears and different family ideals” (*QED* 54), she portrays Mabel, Adele’s rival in the affections of Helen, in light of the stereotypical “Jewish look,” despite her “New England origin” and “angular body of a spinster” (*QED* 55).²⁵ According to the nineteenth-century physiognomy promoted by the Swiss pastor Johann Caspar Lavater, angularity—as in an angular forehead, skull, bone, eyebrows, lip, nose, chin—is an

²⁵ As noted above, the Mabel Neathe character is built on Mabel Haynes, Stein/Adele’s rival in a triangle lesbian affair with May Bookstaver/Helen Thomas. In this sense, Mabel’s negative “Jewish look” would function to manifest Stein’s resentment to her who came between May and herself.

unmistakable sign of a positive, vigorous, and manly value (Lavater 127). By simply stating that “the face told a different story,” however, Stein opines that Mabel’s “pale yellow brown” face outweighs all virtues attributed to her angular body. (*QED* 55).

It[Mabel’s face] was pale yellow brown in complexion and thin in the temples and forehead; heavy about the mouth, not with the weight of flesh but with the drag of unidealised passion, continually sated and continually craving. The long formless chin accentuated the lack of moral significance. If the contour had been a little firmer the face would have been baleful. It was a face that in its ideal completeness would have belonged to the decadent days of Italian greatness. It would never now express completely a nature that could hate subtly and poison deftly. In the American woman the aristocracy had become vulgarised and the power weakened. Having gained nothing moral, weakened by lack of adequate development of its strongest instincts, this nature expressed itself in a face no longer dangerous but only unilluminated and unmoral, but yet with enough suggestion of the older aristocratic use to keep it from merely contemptibly dishonest. (*QED* 55)

Johann Jakob Schudt, the late seventeenth-century German Orientalist and historian of Jewish history, believed that the Jews’ disease is written on the skin, citing Jews’ “either pale and yellow or swarthy” faces with “a blemish or other repulsive feature[s]” as their representative “diseased and repellent” physical form (qtd. in Gilman, *Case* 20). That is, Mabel’s “pale yellow brown” face links her to Jewishness and thus to

all bodily and spiritual weakness. Reading her thin, flat forehead and formless, retreating chin as signs of moral degeneracy based on the German physiognomy developed to marginalize the Jews, Stein further “racializes” Mabel, accusing her as a cause of the unresolved conflict, the fatal emotional impasse, between Adele and Helen (*QED* 55).²⁶ On the other hand, Helen is portrayed both racially as “a blooming Anglo-Saxon” and “the American version of the English handsome girl” and psychopathologically as “a wonderful example of double personality” composed of, according to Adele, “the you that I used to know and didn’t like, and the occasional you that when I do catch a glimpse of it seems to me so very wonderful” (*QED* 54, 80, 81). Helen’s double personality, hinting at her hysteric disposition and white blood, is no doubt a precursor to the hysteric mulatto heroine.

If, as Leon Katz insightfully claims, Stein’s revision of *Q.E.D.* into “Melantha” is a “mode of concealment ... done originally for psychological rather than aesthetic reasons” (57), she would have had a need to conceal the internalized racism toward her own Jewishness (as well as her homosexuality) exposed in the thinly disguised autobiographical novel. I argue, in this sense, that Stein wrote “Melantha” as a protective mask behind which to displace her problematic ideas about her race and sexuality. The negative, pathological portrayal of black hysterical Melantha built on the pseudo-scientific medical discourses of racial differences and hierarchies and,

²⁶ For the physiognomic reading of the shape of chin and forehead, see Johann Caspar Lavater, *Physiognomy* 55-60, 76-77. Gilman’s books on Jews and quasi-medicine including *The Jew’s Body*, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, and *Difference and Pathology* provide a detailed illustration and analysis of beliefs in the Semitic Orientalism that stereotyped Jews with their physiognomy, such as large noses, dark hair, and swarthy complexions.

particularly, of the blackness of the Jews, enabled the Jewish woman writer not only to explore personal racial and sexual issues, but to conceal her racial self-hatred.²⁷

It was believed that some members of underprivileged groups, Jews in particular, displayed a degree of hatred toward their own group, even when there were many willing to do it for them. According to Sander Gilman, “self-hatred results from outsiders’ acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group—that group in society which they see as defining them—as a reality” (*Jewish* 2). Responding to being treated as “black,” Jews strived to escape this category and, at the same time, some of them “reify[ed] the reference group’s treatment of them as lacking “true” character (like their analogue, the black)” by “altering their sense of self” (Gilman, *Jewish* 12). They accepted the values, social structures, and attitudes of the reference group and projected the illusionary image of the self onto the world, which created “a Jew who possesses all of the negative qualities ascribed to the image of the Jew as black” (Gilman, *Jewish* 12).

²⁷ Critics like Barbara Will and Carla Peterson read “Melanctha” within the American tradition of blackface minstrelsy. Melanctha indeed functions as a form of “blackface” that underscores the line between white and black. As a form of theatrical makeup through which turn-of-the-century white entertainers created stereotyped caricatures of blacks, blackface in minstrel shows worked to promote acceptance of the ethnic difference of the performers but also to insist on the racial division between blacks and whites. Through blackface, Jewish immigrant performers, who suffered from intense anti-Semitic nativism in the postbellum United States, could affirm their white racial identities “by differentiating them[selves] from the black Americans through whom they spoke, who were not permitted to speak for themselves” (Rogin 56). To borrow Michael Rogin’s phrasing, as Jewish blackface entertainers washed themselves white by painting their faces black, Melanctha’s blackface allows Stein to become a white “American” (102). See Barbara Will, *Gertrude Stein, Modernism and the Problem of “Genius”*, particularly its first chapter, and Carla Peterson’s article, “The Remaking of Americans: Gertrude Stein’s “Melanctha” and African-American Musical Tradition.” For extensive discussions of blackface, see Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*; Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*.

Jewish self-hatred is a puzzling phenomena that embodies a dynamics of fear in which people internalize beliefs and stereotypes that cause them to perceive themselves as “different,” work against their interests, and, as a consequence, reproduce same prejudices and discriminations toward other unprivileged groups. Just as blackness inspired a sexual fear in the minds of the post-bellum white Southerners, which developed into negrophobia in the form of the fear of miscegenation and disenfranchisement, so Jewishness invoked fear on instinctual, biological, and sexual levels in nineteenth-century popular consciousness.²⁸ So intense was this fear that even the very objects of fear were believed to accept the logic of fear and its underlying scientific racism and reproduce the antipathy toward themselves. Racial self-hatred is in reality a manifestation of being conditioned by fear to be self-abnegating and self-effacing. Whether Jewish self-hatred is reality or myth is still in dispute. But nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish intellectuals as diverse as Freud, Theodore Reik, Maurice Fishberg, Cesare Lombroso, Arthur Schnitzler, and Otto Weininger affirmed or repudiated their Jewishness and Jews’ perceived specialness, sharing the feeling of racial self-hatred in varying degrees, because “the arena of endeavor that gave them status as scientists also demanded that they acknowledge (or refute) their inherent inferiority” (Gilman, *Case 5*).²⁹

²⁸ “The total appearance of the Jew,” for example, as the German-Jewish neurologist Bernhard Berliner maintained, “inspires the Gentile with a secret fear which is in tune with his own fear of the father of his childhood,” that is, the fear of castration (qtd. in Gilman, *Case 4*). The circumcised body of the male Jew generated castration anxiety as well as the anxiety about masculine identity, which colored the very meaning of fears and diseases associated with the Jews in a sexual way (Gilman, *Case 4*).

²⁹ As an extreme case, Stein’s hero, Otto Weininger, derided Jews as reactive, parasitic, and incapable of self-sufficiency and claimed that Jewish men were saturated with femininity in his

Becoming a part of the medical world centered on the taxonomy of mankind and the biology of race and sex enmeshed the young Stein in a contradictory position as well. Frustration from not being able to assert her intellectual superiority in this hostile community would be so acute, undoubtedly more acute than those of male Jewish counterparts. Writing the psychological essay with Solomons in her college years, Stein speculated that the mental depression of some Jews might be a function of race—a typical medical trope of Jewish self-hatred (Wineapple 107). Melantha’s hysteria, along with Mabel’s Jewish look and Helen’s double personality, are very evidence of Stein’s acceptance of the racial and sexual taxonomy—which is “a technique of power and a procedure of knowledge” through which she could obtain the power “of organizing the multiple, of providing oneself with an instrument to cover it and to master it, [and] of imposing upon it an ‘order’” (Foucault, *Discipline* 148-49). Stein’s taxonomic desire for racial “order” indeed forced her to pursue scientific knowledge as well as modernist aesthetic strategies through which she could execute, for therapeutic purpose, a racial displacement of her Jewishness into a relational, rather than innate and autonomous, (racial) identity that eschews a fixed category.³⁰ Throughout her writings Stein rarely

straightforwardly misogynistic and anti-Semitic tract, *Sex and Character* (1903).

Some reflection will lead to the surprising result that Judaism is saturated with femininity, with precisely those qualities the essence of which I have shown to be in the strongest opposition to the male nature. It would not be difficult to make a case for the view that the Jew is more saturated with femininity than the Aryan, to such an extent that the most manly Jew is more feminine than the least manly Aryan. (306)

As Will suggests, Weininger’s theory of universal bisexuality and the claim that one could be a Jew but not be “Jewish” proved crucial for Stein, “helping her sever her outward ties to Jewishness, femininity, and the norms of heterosexuality” (*Unlikely* 22).

³⁰ According to Foucault, taxonomic desire often inflicts a restless, pseudo-scientific violence upon an innocent subject by “characterizing (and consequently reducing individual singularities)

mentioned her Jewishness, as if repudiating her racial identity, and rather identified herself consistently as an American, not as a Jew.³¹ Phoebe Stein Davis, similarly, points out that Stein obsessively adopted nationality rather than race to identify artists, writers, and other characters in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (21-22). Stein's admiration of Philippe Pétain and support of the racist Vichy regime—a controversial issue among Steinian critics since Wanda Van Dusen publicized Stein's translation of Maréchal's speeches housed in the Random House papers at Columbia University in 1996—could provide additional crucial evidence of her racial self-hatred.³²

As a displaced projection of Stein's inner anxiety about her Jewish identity, the black hysteric character Melanctha represents the productive power of fear, which,

and constituting classes (and therefore of excluding consideration of number)" (*Discipline* 149). In *Q.E.D.* Helen's harsh critique of Adele's (that is, Stein's) taxonomic "experiment" exemplifies the inherent violence and danger of the taxonomy of humankind:

"I tried to be adequate to your experiments" she[Helen] said at last "but you had no mercy. You were not content until you had dissected out every nerve in my body and left it quite exposed and it was too much, too much. You should give your subjects occasional respite even in the ardor of research" (*QED* 82).

³¹ In a short poem called "The Reverie of the Zionist" (1920), a rare work about the issue of Jewishness, Stein wrote: "I saw all this to prove that Judaism should be a question of religion. / Don't talk about race. Race is disgusting if you don't love your country. / I don't want to go to Zion. / This is an expression of Shem" (*Painted* 94). It is a poem about the compromise between Jewish particularity and national solidarity, which reveals the influence of Jewish-American anthropologists Franz Boas and Melville Herskovits's claim that the Jews were not a racial group and should not be persecuted on the basis of race (Damon 501). As informed by Stein's friendship with right-wing French nationalists like Bernard Faÿ and the fact that anti-Semitism worked almost as a synonym of nationalism, in the form of state racism, in early twentieth century France, however, "The Reverie of the Zionist" also can be read as a nationalist-cum-racist poem that, by considering "love your country" as a categorical imperative, promotes racist thinking on the condition that people love the idea of nationalism (Will, *Unlikely* 23-24). That is, it is a poem about her unlikely nationalism and personal sense of distance from Jewish concerns.

³² See Wanda Van Dusen, "Portrait of National Fetish: Gertrude Stein's "Introduction to the Speeches of Maréchal Pétain" (1942)." Yet Will attempts to save Stein from the charges of Nazism and treason to the Jewish people by arguing that she might "have decided to undertake the Pétain translation project largely as an insurance policy to guarantee her and Toklas's survival" in the Vichy regime ("Lost" 664).

equating the object of fear with its subject, obliges one to stay away from oneself. Put differently, “Melanctha” demonstrates how medico-racial fears of degeneration, in a creative way, drives the oppressed (Jews) not only to seek “flight and isolation” from the fellow oppressed (Blacks), but to imagine the “relation and union” with the oppressor or the reference group (Anglo-Saxon Americans) by mimicking its racist language and beliefs. In this sense, “Melanctha” is a story written by a Caliban who was taught racist “language” by a Prospero. It embodies, in a way, Octave Mannoni’s famous claim in *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* that the colonized is psychologically dependent upon the colonizer.

[T]he colonial situation is one where two psychologies meet. ... He[the colonized] will study us[the colonizer], imitate us, love us, and hate us, even when he has become, *de jure* and *de facto*, master of his own fate, rather in the way a young man who has started out on his own still retains in his mind a father-image or a mother-image with which he finds it far more difficult to come to terms than he does with his real parents who have set him free! The comparison is a poor one, however. The European will in fact play a far more important part than that, and will continue to exercise a real influence even in a “colony” which has become independent and where he is simply a guest. (Mannoni 173)

Coda

Melanctha dies of tuberculosis, an alleged lethal symptom of hysteria, one of the

clues that enabled me to read her story as the medical record of black hysteric woman. An integral part of the definition of hysteria consists in its supposed ability to mimic symptoms of other diseases. While a myriad, sometimes ridiculous number, of symptoms suggest the imaginative nature of hysteria, they worked to make this mental disorder look more like a clearly defined disease entity that evokes “realistic fear.” No wonder that, as the fashionable beliefs and fears that upheld and manipulated the pathological imagination became obsolete, hysteria lost most of its diagnostic capacity and clinical significance, as well as its links with other diseases.

Tuberculosis is in fact an infectious disease—in no way related to hysteria—spread by respiratory fluids through the air. In his essay, “Tuberculosis: The Real Race Suicide,” published in *McClure’s Magazine* in 1905, the year when Stein was writing “Melanctha,” Samuel Hopkins Adams, stressing “a radiating influence of infection,” wrote that “The average consumptive coughs out, it is estimated, about seven billion of the bacilli in a day, and these spread the infection” (235). In the battle with this widespread, in many cases lethal, infectious disease called the “Great White Plague,” “the disposition of the helpless consumptive ... in proper sanitarium surroundings” was inevitable (Adams 235-36).³³ The contagiousness of tuberculosis that gives rise to Melanctha’s lone death in a sanitarium offers a new perspective to consider the heroine as the carrier of the disease and thereby to read the story in the context of bacteriology and public health campaigns. Followed by the advent and wide-scale acceptance of

³³ For more implications of tuberculosis in late nineteenth and early twentieth American culture, see Katherine Ott, *Fevered Lives: Tuberculosis in American Culture Since 1870*.

bacteriology in the late nineteenth century, the public health campaign against the spread of communicable diseases legitimized the need for social control, arguing for the moral and social responsibility of individuals as agents for both their own health and the health of others whom they may contact. The identification and quarantine of human carriers of communicable disease became one of the major tasks of physicians and bacteriologists, and in this course they could wield political power by restricting the freedom of whole population. Indeed, compared to the fear of degeneration, “neurotic anxiety” attached to neurotic diseases like neurasthenia and hysteria, the fear of infection was more effective and productive in the realm of politics, particularly the manipulation of racial politics. In 1907, “Typhoid Mary,” an Irish immigrant woman Mary Mallon was wrongly identified as a “chronic typhoid germ distributor” or “healthy carrier” who transmitted the infection while maintaining her own health, and, despite her legal appeal, she was ordered to be locked up in a hospital. As the most invoked case of the dangerous carrier of communicable disease, “Typhoid Mary” demonstrates how pseudo-scientific theories of infection and immunity, such as the notion of the healthy carrier and race-specified theories of immunity, dramatized the fear of infection and served the political cause.³⁴

Likewise, at the dawn of American imperialism, when Americans had to deal with different people, different animals, and different diseases in different places, bacteriology and immunology played an important role in creating and maintaining the empire. It is not too much to say that empire was built on these new medical disciplines

³⁴ See Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* 68-113; Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the “Immigrant Menace”* 96-104

and their underlying racial fears and ideologies, and this will be the topic of the next chapter on Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*.

CHAPTER IV
THE IMMUNITY OF EMPIRE:
TROPICAL MEDICINE AND BIOPOLITICS IN SINCLAIR LEWIS'S
ARROWSMITH

An empire, by definition a large, composite, multi-ethnic, or multinational political unit created by conquest and divided between a dominant center and subordinate peripheries both geographically and culturally, intrinsically harbors the fear of penetration and contagion. As European nations aggressively seized more and more colonies from the early eighteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, they opened the borders, “a part yet apart, home and not-home, neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’” (Singh and Schmidt 7), in which colonizers negotiated with the incommensurable difference of new people, new cultures, and new diseases and redefined their identity in terms of alleged differences from the colonial Others. For colonizers stationed in the tropical colonies of Africa, Southeast Asia, and South and Central America, the fear of contamination from the racially and culturally different Others was not a metaphor for identity crisis; it *was* a response to a lethal biological threat. Tropical diseases like malaria, leprosy, dengue, yellow fever, and sleeping sickness, aggravated by the lack of an effective sanitation system and epidemiological knowledge about these diseases, brought about high rates of death and invalidism among the military, administrative, and commercial population in the colonies.

By the first half of the nineteenth century, most physicians adhered to the miasma theory that attributes the cause of disease to environmental factors like tainted air and water. A series of outbreaks of typhus, cholera, tuberculosis, and smallpox endemic to a limited area of Europe confirmed the belief that place causes disease and, therefore, people believed that they could prevent diseases by sanitizing or keeping away from particular neighborhoods. As the late nineteenth-century German cellular physiologist and politician Rudolf Virchow consistently argued, sanitation efforts, such as the implementation of modern sewer systems for the eradication of damp, unhygienic, unventilated living quarters and water supplies contaminated with fecal matter, were considered essential and indispensable for the prevention of disease (Otis 15-25).

Robert Koch and Louis Pasteur's discoveries of pathogenic bacteria such as bacillus anthracis and tubercle bacillus in the 1870s-1880s, however, changed the way people regarded infection, replacing the miasma theory of disease with the germ theory that thinks of the human being as a vehicle by which diseases are spread. On the level of practical hygiene, the two theories were often undistinguishable. (The hygienic utopia in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, for example, might be the product of either the miasma theory or the germ theory.) Yet Koch and Pasteur's germ theory was a significant change in that it invested physicians with the authority to investigate and restrict the freedom of the individual's body by stipulating that it is people, not places, that should be scrutinized and controlled. While "[i]n the past one took a more *defensive* attitude," wrote Koch, referring to the miasma theory, "[w]e have now moved away from this defensive point of view and have seized the *offensive*" (qtd. in Otis 34). "For

Koch,” Laura Otis notes, “taking the offensive meant actively seeking the parasites not only in those obviously ill but also in those ‘suspected’ of carrying them (*die Verdächtigen*) and in ‘the apparently healthy’” (Otis 34-35). For him, “it was not problematic to order citizens in for treatment, to examine each person’s blood systemically, or to regard each as ‘suspicious’” (Otis 35). As Bruno Latour maintains in *The Pasteurization of France*, a physician became “no longer a confidant of the *patient*, but a delegated *agent* of public health to the patient” and “*disease was no longer a private misfortune but an offense to public order*” (123).

In the tropical colonies, faced with devastating illnesses with high mortality and morbidity, Western invaders perceived the colonized rather stunningly as the invaders. They paid attention to the control of a barbaric people as much as to the control of a barbaric space as a means of controlling disease. As Donna Haraway notes, the colored body of the “invader” was constructed as “the dark source of infection, pollution, disorder, and so on, that threatened to overwhelm white manhood (cities, civilization, the family, the white personal body) with its decadent emanations” (223). The fear of invasive microbes in the bodies of natives necessarily extended the realm of microbiologists’ quest for bacteria to the tropical empire.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the peak of European colonialism, from the closing decades of the nineteenth into the first half of the following century, was the heyday of bacteriology, parasitology, entomology and immunology, which altogether constituted “tropical medicine” established and studied mostly by imperial microbiologists in Great Britain, Germany, France, United States, and Japan. As French

bacteriologist and immunologist Albert Calmette wrote in his 1912 article, “The Scientific Mission of the Institut Pasteur and the Colonial Expansion of France,” “the microbiologists have a considerable role to play in protecting the colonies, their native collaborators, and their domestic animals against their most fearsome, because invisible, enemies” (qtd. in Latour 141). Thus Latour claims,

there has never been any doubt as to the direct and determining role of the Institut Pasteur in colonization. If it had been necessary to make colonial society only with masters and slaves, there would never have been any colonial society. It had to be made with microbes, together with the swarming of insects and parasites that they transported. It is not enough to speak shyly of the “influence of parasitology on social or institutional interests.” With only whites and blacks, with only miasmic regions and healthy or dangerous climates, that Colonial Leviathan which spread across the globe could never have been built. (144)

Giving practical aid to white colonizers suffering from unfamiliar diseases, colonial bacteriologists protected, to borrow Latour’s phrasing, “white-skinned macroparasites” from the penetration of “microparasites” that “directly limited the extent of the empires” (140-41).

Admittedly, the health of indigenous people was not a concern of tropical medicine, except when it threatened the labor supply in the plantation colonies. For the improvement of sanitation European enclaves were segregated from the local population, and sanitary expeditions of imperial institutions, such as the Pasteur Institute and the

Institute of Infectious Diseases (later renamed the Robert Koch Institute), concentrated only on economically important colonial towns and ports. Until the 1920s-1930s, limited medical service was provided to local people, and without doubt only limited efforts to give Western medical training to them were made (Worboys 70-74). Rather the native population provided a good means of studying epidemic and infectious diseases. The colony was a vast laboratory.¹ After failing to isolate the pathogenic microorganism of cholera in Alexandria, Egypt, for example, Koch made an expedition to Calcutta, India, where he achieved a pure culture without killing innocent little guinea pigs. He injected the microbe directly into healthy Indians, succeeded in identifying the cholera bacillus, and became an imperial hero—in exchange for the death of innocent, anonymous natives (Otis 32-33).²

In *Arrowsmith* Sinclair Lewis portrays how Martin Arrowsmith, a young American medical practitioner, attempts to play the role of colonial doctor and scientist who, like Koch in India, serves as an emissary of empire to the tropical colonies in the Caribbean.

In January 1923, Lewis set out on a two-month research trip to the West Indies, accompanied by his scientific collaborator and bacteriologist Paul de Kruif, for his novel *Arrowsmith*, particularly its climactic episode about the conquest of the plague on a tropical island. During the trip, he chose “Barbarian” as the working title for the new

¹ On American colonial hygienists/bacteriologists’ racialized medical practices in tropical colonies, particularly, in the Philippine, see Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*.

² For a detailed account of Robert Koch’s cholera expedition to Egypt and India, see Thomas D. Brock, *Robert Koch: A Life in Medicine and Bacteriology* 140-68.

novel about a young research scientist (*Letters* 124). As Sheldon Grebstein suggests, “Barbarian,” along with the other potential title “The Stumbler,” implies one phase of the hero who is at times tactless, stubborn and selfish in his personal relationships (87). It connotes both Martin’s headlong quest for scientific truth and all impediments and beguilements that curb his passion as well, as shown in Lewis’s portrait of the young bacteriologist as “the barbarian, the ascetic, the contemptuous acolyte of science” (A 403).³ From his early days in medical school at the University of Winnemac, Martin indeed considers “barbarian” as a watchword for life’s journey as a laboratory scientist unhampered by commercialism, pseudoscience, and fame-chasing.

Martin was alienated from the civilized, industrious, nice young men of Digamma Pi, in whose faces he could already see prescriptions, glossy white sterilizers, smart enclosed motors, and glass office-signs in the best gilt lettering. He preferred a *barbarian* loneliness, for next year he would be working with Max Gottlieb, and he could not be bothered. (A 32; emphasis added)

Charles E. Rosenberg thus argues in *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought* that *Arrowsmith* aims to describe “the essence of heroism, the measure of a man’s stature [which] lay in the extent to which he was able to disengage himself from the confining pressures of American society” (130). Lewis’s “heroic protagonist had to be a scientist” who stays away from “compromise and commercialism” and “the collection of bills and the lancing of boils” tied to the contemporary medical profession

³ All page numbers preceded by A are from Lewis’s *Arrowsmith*.

(Rosenberg, *No Other* 130). Rosenberg further notes that Martin is “not be a physician, ... certainly not an American physician” who abandons his scientific pursuits for the sake of the national interest (*No Other* 130).

The tentative title “Barbarian,” however, also alludes to the indigenous people of the tropical colony. Lewis’s publisher, Alfred Harcourt, disapproved of the title because it overemphasized a certain aspect of the story and reminded readers of a Tarzan novel (*Letters* 131). Other potential titles of the story that the author offered in a letter to the publishers, such as “The Savage” and “Strange Islands,” foreshadow its theme of colonialism as well (*Letters* 132, 134). These titles, resonating with the epidemic that wreaks havoc on the savages of the strange island in the novel, suggest that *Arrowsmith* furnishes the America-centric view of contagious disease well-suited to the ideology of colonial expansion during which the white colonizers engaged in violence and racism against supposed dangerous barbarians and, by doing so, confirmed their masculinity and racial superiority.

Preventive medicine and the new science of immunology founded on the germ theory of disease were constituents in the development of biopolitical sovereignty, which allowed public health officials and bacteriologists to legitimately cast a “suspicious” eye on certain people as possible germ carriers and distributors. Furthered and distorted by the fear of contagion and racial degeneration, their suspicions engendered medical nativism toward unassimilable immigrants as well as the barbaric “invaders” of the colony. Participating in the bubonic plague expedition to the Caribbean that enacts early twentieth-century U.S. imperial biological warfare in the tropical colonies, Martin insists

on using the native people as a “control” who will die as guinea pigs for the identification of pathogenic bacteria and bacteriophage and, as a consequence, for the acquisition of immunity to an infectious lethal disease. Though managing to disengage himself from commercialism in modern medicine, seeking a personal and professional fulfillment without compromising his integrity, he plays a constitutive role in the shaping of the racialized framing of plague and the biopolitical domination founded on eugenicism, racism, nationalism and misogyny, which negates his effort to be “an idealistic truth-seeker who is able to transcend the selfish, ugly environments” (Hutchisson 48).

Weaving Martin’s story of imperfect heroism into the history of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American commercialism, imperialism, and biopolitics, this chapter will explore the ways in which the fear of contagious diseases and invisible pathogenic bacteria shaped a medical nativism which inscribed racial difference into infectious pathology and a tropical medicine which sought to protect Anglo-Saxon virility, morality, and property from the strange circumstances and dangerous habits of the colonial tropics, and thus provided the biopolitical ground of imperial rule both within and outside the United States.

1. A “Microbe Hunter” in the Tropical Frontier

One year after taking a research position at the McGurk Institute, Martin discovers by accident “the X Principle,” a bacteriophage that infects and kills bacteria. Encouraged by his mentor Max Gottlieb who suggests the need for further investigation

of its nature, he spends sleepless nights in the laboratory watching “the crawling illness of an infected guinea pig” (A 332). He had to fulfill the military duty of manufacturing serum and lipovaccine as well, as the Institute offered the services to the War Department during the U.S. entry into the First World War. So “he was busier than he had known any one could ever be” (A 320) and, as a consequence, “watched himself, in the madness of overwork, drift toward neurasthenia” (A 332). Readers then encounters a four-page long section that describes Martin’s neurasthenic symptoms in detail: “shivering with anxiety,” he reads a subway poster backwards, fears darkness, lies awake dreading burglars, feels the cord of an assassin squeezing his throat, and so on (A 333).

He[Martin] made a checking list of the favorite neurasthenic fears: agoraphobia, claustrophobia, pyrophobia, anthropophobia, and the rest, ending with what he asserted to be “the most fool, pretentious, witch-doctor term of the whole bloomin’ lot,” namely, siderodromophobia, the fear of a railway journey. The first night, he was able to check against pyrophobia, for at the vaudeville with Leora, when on the stage a dancer lighted a brazier, he sat waiting for the theater to take fire. He looked cautiously along the row of seats (raging at himself the while for doing it), he estimated his chance of reaching an exit, and became easy only when he had escaped into the street.

It was when anthropophobia set in, when he was made uneasy by people who walked too close to him, that, sagely viewing his list and

seeing how many phobias were not checked, he permitted himself to rest.

(A 333)

The popular remedy for white neurasthenic man was, as noted in the previous chapter, a retreat to nature where he could rejuvenate nerve forces exhausted in an overcivilized city life riddled with overwork, competition, and economic acquisitiveness. Adopting this fashionable race- and gender-specified treatment, Martin flees to the Vermont hills alone for a retreat: “For four days he tramped, swam in cold brooks, slept under trees or in straw stacks, and came back ... with enough reserve or energy to support him till his experiment should have turned from overwhelming glory into sane and entertaining routine” (A 335).⁴

This episode does little for, if not impeding, the development of the story. No wonder that the serial version of *Arrowsmith* which appeared in *Designer and the Woman's Magazine* in 1924-25, edited not to mutilate fundamental themes and scenes of the book published in 1925, omitted it (Richardson 239). Moreover, since Lewis's dominant motive for the novel was to extol the professional spirit in medical research, Martin's endorsement of the fanciful neurasthenic symptoms, a mosaic of the fashionable ideas of his time, threatens the bacteriologist-hero's image as an authentic scientist who dedicates himself to the pursuit of objective, experimentally verifiable truth. Why did Lewis include the seemingly digressive passages about neurasthenia?

⁴ The theme of neurasthenic man's retreating to nature recurs in Lewis's next novel, *Mantrap* (1925), the story of a New York lawyer Ralph Prescott who escapes the stressful city life to experience the wilderness in the forests of northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He is a confirmed neurasthenic who has “jangling nerves, and night by night he awoke to obscure panics, lay rigid with black and anonymous apprehensions” (Lewis, *Mantrap* 8).

Martin's neurasthenia, as in the case of Julian West in *Looking Backward*, declares him as "a Typical Pure-bred Anglo-Saxon American" as introduced in the beginning of the novel (A 4). More importantly, given that the discovery of "the X principle" compels him to drain off his nerve energies and then to visit the plague-ridden Caribbean island for the treatment of bubonic plague, the neurasthenia episode makes it possible to interpret his St. Hubert plague expedition as a therapeutic journey to nature for the recuperation of his nerve forces and virility.

St. Hubert is depicted as "a little isle of the southern West Indies" that "supports a hundred thousand people—English planters and clerks, Hindu road-makers, Negro cane-hands, Chinese merchants" (A 357-58). Its demographic profile is a commonplace of the British West Indies where, since the emancipation of Afro-creoles in the 1830s, the imperial system organized a massive transfer of Indians as indentured laborers—the vast majority of whom stayed on after their indenture was up—and hosted large migrant forces of Chinese and Portuguese laborers to replenish the plantation labor supply (Palmer 18-19). A small island is an ideal place for bacteriologists who require unprotected plague-stricken populations as "untreated cases" or "controls," as Gottlieb and Martin equally insist upon its importance in preventing what they call "the *post hoc propter hoc* conclusions" that hamper the scientific rigidity of contemporary clinical medicine (A 128). Furthermore, the Caribbean islands offered the advantage of being geographically near the United States, alongside the advantage of being small, affording American physicians "opportunity to exercise close supervision at not too great expense" (Cueto 2).

Indeed Martin initially considers St. Hubert as a vast laboratory where he would “use the phage with only half [his] patients and keep the others as controls, under normal hygienic conditions but without the phage” to verify the formula of “the X Principle” (A 366). But after losing his wife Leora Tozer to the plague—a tragedy that occurs as an indirect result of his extramarital affair with Joyce Lanyon, a wealthy widower who owns a plantation in St. Hubert—he gets “converted to humanity,” as one of the expedition team members Gustaf Sondelius demands (A 370), and transforms from an ardent advocate of idealism, which takes pity on “the generation after generation yet to come” rather than “the men [he] will see dying” (A 372), into a passionate “microbe hunter,” a term de Kruif coined to trumpet the heroic efforts of a bacteriologist. He abandons the experiment, injects the phage to all frightened islanders, and becomes, according to the local newspaper, “the savior of all our lives” (A 414). As Susan E. Lederer suggests based on de Kruif’s description of the discoverer of the germ, there is “the masculine thrill of the hunt” in a bacteriological project (738). St. Hubert was a hunting ground, “the X principle” was a hunting rifle, and pathogenic germs were game animals through which Martin, by hunting them, could restore his nerve energies and masculinity.

Hence it is no accident that the very first page of *Arrowsmith* begins by portraying “a ragged girl of fourteen” who, taking care of her family, drives a wagon “through forest and swamp of the Ohio wilderness” and fires back to her sick father’s request to “turn down towards Cincinnati” where her uncle lives: “We’re going on jus’ long as we can. Going West! They’s whole lot of new things I aim to be seeing” (A 3).

Michael Augspurger claims that the young girl embodies the pioneer tradition that foreshadows her great-grandson Martin's professional integrity and rejection of middle-class social restraint (74). "Just as his forebears had in this spirit settled the physical frontier, Arrowsmith explores the frontiers of knowledge," also writes Sheldon Grebstein (87). I add that her pioneer spirit, more importantly, anticipates the great-grandson's vocation as a "microbe hunter" in the new, tropical frontier of the Caribbean island and allows readers to understand his plague expedition within the tradition of frontierism and expansionism.

Suffering from neurasthenia, Martin "was ashamed at first to acknowledge his seeming cowardice to Leora" (A 333). Yet "night on night, he crept into her arms and she shielded him from the horrors, protected him from garroters, kept away the fire" (A 333). Being a witness to her husband's decrepit masculinity, Leora represents a "New Woman," a threat to the patriarchal order, who has a sharp tongue, smokes cigarettes, marries him against her father's wishes, and resists playing faithfully the traditional roles of homemaker and childbearer.⁵ In this sense, Martin's second marriage to Joyce, following the death of Leora, who accompanies her husband on the expedition despite

⁵ Although a working, ambitious, and down-to-earth woman at first, Leora becomes self-effacing, willing to give up her career for the love of her husband. Yet there is the sense of substitute satisfaction and compensation in her support for Martin:

I do love him so when he's frowsy! Don't you see, Sandy, I was wise to come!
You're so worn out. *It* might get you, and nobody but me could nurse you.
Nobody knows all your cranky ways—about how you hate prunes and
everything. Night and day I'll nurse you—the least whisper and I'll be awake.
And if you need ice bags and stuff— And I'll *have* ice, too, if I have to sneak
into some millionaire's house and steal it out of his highballs! My dear! (A 378)

On finding that she is infertile, after a stillbirth, Leora tries to laugh and says to Martin, "Perhaps I wanted him because I could boss him. I've never had anybody that would let me boss him. So if I can't have a real baby, I'll have to bring you up. Make you a great man that everybody will wonder at" (A 180-81).

his strong objection, symbolically marks the rejuvenation of his masculinity. In other words, Joyce plays the role of a native damsel in distress in the colony—a stock character of turn-of-the-century American historical novels, a major best-seller genre particularly between 1895 and 1902—whose exotic femininity serves to restore white colonizers’ threatened manhood (Kaplan 670). Neurasthenic Martin’s retreat to St. Hubert is therefore in a way parallel to Theodore Roosevelt’s hunting trip to South Dakota in the 1880s, during which he lost his wife Alice, an incident that completely devastated him at first, but “freed him to construct himself as a cowboy far more completely than he had previously planned” (Bederman 175).

The ending of the novel in which Martin abandons Joyce—whose possessiveness and desire to exhibit suffocated him—, his son and his privileged position at the McGurk Institute in order to escape to the Vermont woods and pursue the youthful ideals of the laboratory scientist with fellow bacteriologist “Terry (Wickett) the barbarian” (A 467) reaffirms the theme of frontierism and its strong connection with Martin’s scientific idealism. Although Joyce builds for her husband “the best bacteriological laboratory” behind their house and provides “a technician, trained in Lister and Rockefeller, who had his bedroom behind the laboratory and who announced his readiness to serve Dr. Arrowsmith day or night” (A 456), Martin leaves for “the cold shanty” in the woods where he can work without being pressured to serve marital, social and economic responsibility (A 466). Being “allowed to work twenty-four hours a day without leaving an experiment at its juiciest moment to creep home for dinner,” he enjoys the pastoral life, reminiscent of pioneer days in the Western frontier (A 466).

It seems to him that this was the first spring he had ever seen and tasted. He learned to dive into the lake, though the first plunge was an agony of fiery cold. They fished before breakfast, they supped at a table under the oaks, they tramped twenty miles on end, they had bluejays and squirrels for interested neighbors; and when they had worked all night, they came out to find serene dawn lifting across the sleeping lake. (A 468)

A lengthy description of Martin's ethnic composition, "a union of German, French, Scotch, Irish, perhaps a little Spanish, conceivably a little of the strains lumped together as 'Jewish,' and a great deal of English, which is itself a combination of Primitive Britain, Celt, Phoenician, Roman, German, Dane, and Swede" (A 4), also invites us to read the plague expedition as a national allegory of American colonial conquest "contemporaneous with a widespread cultural concern about effeminacy, overcivilization, and racial decadence" (Bederman 185). The racial superiority of Anglo-Saxon Americans had been characterized by "the potency of their violent masculinity—their ability to outsavage the savage" (Bederman 181). As all domestic territories had been wrested from the Indians and no savages are left to be fought on the frontier, late nineteenth-century white American expansionists must turn their attention overseas where they could reenact "their superior manhood by asserting imperialistic control over races of inferior manhood" (Bederman 171). They considered the semi-civilized races in tropical regions, such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, and the Philippines, as new opponents in the struggle to retain their racially innate masculinity and move toward the ultimate, civilized perfection of the race. From this perspective, Martin's fight with

savage germs dramatizes medico-imperial warfare and masculine violence against barbarians/bacteria abroad, as if Roosevelt's "Rough Riders" allegedly charged up San Juan Hill heroically against the Latin Spaniards during the 1898 Spanish-American War in Cuba and managed to beget the imperialistic "manhood and statehood" that offered a model for the American race to follow.⁶

2. Contagion, Immunity, and Race

The St. Hubert episode begins by featuring the geography of the bubonic plague which traces the global transmission of bacteria from Yunnan in China to Blackwater, the capital port of St. Hubert, by way of the Himalayas, Bombay, Marseilles, and Montevideo, as if seen through a bird's-eye view (A 357).

From Yunnan in China, from the clattering bright bazaars, crept
something invisible in the sun and vigilant by dark, creeping, sinister,
ceaseless; creeping across the Himalayas down through walled market-
places, across a desert, along hot yellow rivers, into an American
missionary compound—creeping, silent, sure; and here and there on its
way a man was black and stilled with plague.

In Bombay a new dock-guard, unaware of things, spoke
boisterously over his family rice of a strange new custom of the rats.

⁶ My expression, "manhood and statehood," is borrowed from the title of then-Vice President Roosevelt's 1901 speech at Colorado Springs. In this speech commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Colorado's entry into the Union, Roosevelt described how manhood begat statehood—that is, how authentic Euro-American men conquered the West and indigenous people, an effort culminating in statehood.

Those princes of the sewer, swift to dart and turn, had gone mad. They came out on the warehouse floor, ignoring the guard, springing up as though (the guard said merrily) they were trying to fly, and straightway falling dead. He had poked at him, but they did not move.

Three days later that dock-guard died of the plague.

Before he died, from his dock a ship with a cargo of wheat steamed off to Marseilles. There was no sickness on it all the way; there was no reason why at Marseilles it should not lie next to a tramp steamer, now why that steamer, pitching down to Montevideo with nothing more than sensational than a discussion between the supercargo and the second officer in the matter of a filth ace, should not berth near the S.S. *Pendown Castle*, bound for the island of St. Hubert to add cocoa to its present cargo of lumber.

On the way to St. Hubert, a Goanese seedie boy and after him the messroom steward on the *Pendown Castle* died of what the skipper called influenza. A greater trouble was the number of rats which, ill satisfied with lumber as diet, scampered up to the food-stores, then into the fore-castle, and for no reason perceptible died on the open decks. They danced comically before they died, and lay in the scuppers stark and ruffled.

So the *Pendown Castle* came to Blackwater, the capital and port of St. Hubert. (A 357)

Lewis draws an epidemiological map of the bubonic plague by describing in excruciating detail the whereabouts of “creeping,” “sinister,” “invisible,” and “silent” rats or their fleas, which were held responsible for the epidemic. Juxtaposing plagued rats with ignorant colored people, such as an Indian dock-guard, a Goanese boy, and an unidentified messroom steward, who fall victim to the bubonic plague, the map bears witness to world-wide connections of communities in the age of exploitation colonialism and the deadly web of contagion in which rats, fleas, and indigenous people collaborate to reproduce and spread the bacteria globally. Like men, rats “danced comically before they died.” The boundary between “a man [who] was black and stilled with plague” and “dark” rats seems to be blurred in this web of contagion, and readers are likely to equate black men with black rats, seeing both of them as infectious agents.

The discovery of pathogenic bacteria and gradual acceptance of the danger of microbes fueled the rise of preventive medicine and immunology, which formed a meeting ground for medical science and public health. Both new fields were founded on invisible symptoms, thus being vulnerable to ideological manipulation; “preventive” in preventive medicine can be synonymous with “expectant” or “imaginative,” and immunity is not something that can be seen by the naked eye. The Oriental origin of the bacillus of bubonic plague depicted above, in this sense, shows how the fear of epidemic disease prompts or reinforces the pathological fear of the racial Others.

As discussed in the Introduction, poor urban immigrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were identified as the exclusive sources of particular contagious diseases: the Irish for cholera, Jews for typhus and cholera, the Italians for

polio, and so on. In other cases, they were believed to be naturally immune to certain diseases, yet nonetheless capable of infecting innocent Anglo-Saxon Americans. The tuberculosis that kills Melanctha, for example, was supposed to be innocuous to the Jew by the early twentieth century (Adams 240). The particular danger, in microbial terms, posed by the unassimilated stranger embodied a medicalized threat to immunologically susceptible Anglo-Saxon population. Priscilla Wald maintains that “the term *contagion* suggested a connective and transformative force and was commonly used to describe how an individual got caught up in the spirit and actions of a group, surrendering personal agency and even rational thought to the collective will” (*Contagious* 131). Contagion is the object of both “neurotic anxiety” built on invisible, therefore susceptible to imagination, bacteria and “realistic anxiety” based on visible symptoms, pains and deaths. Driving people to seek “flight and isolation” from the alleged carriers of disease, the fear of contagion creates the nativist “relation and union” among them which efface their individualities and rationality.

Bubonic plague was once considered as a “racially specific” Asian disease to which Anglo-Saxon Americans was relatively immune. It is no accident, therefore, that Lewis chose it, originating from “the clattering bright bazaars” in Yunnan, China, as the epidemic rampant in the Caribbean island and stamped out by “pure-bred Anglo-Saxon American” Martin’s bacteriophage. Substantial numbers of Chinese immigrants first began arriving on the West Coast to provide low-cost labor to companies such as the Central Pacific Railroad in the early 1850s-60s, and most white Americans perceived them as intellectually backward, undemocratic, and technologically primitive, as little

better than the black slaves. In the popular imagination, “California was a free-soil Eden, a place where small producers, artisans, farmers, and craftsmen might have a second chance to build a white republic, unstained by chattel slavery or proletarian labor” (Lee 9). For white settlers from the East, poor Chinese immigrants in this area thus were “the harbingers of industrial wage slavery,” which “disrupted the mythic narrative of westward expansion” (Lee 9).⁷ The Chinese were also considered to be public health menaces because of their flawed habits of health and hygiene and their disregard of Western medicine. A California physician Arthur B. Stout warned in his 1862 report that “phthisis or consumption, scrofula, syphilis, mental alienation, and epidemic diseases” were scourges posed by the Chinese, aggravated by their habitual opium smoking (qtd. in Kraut 80-81).

The 1900-1904 San Francisco bubonic plague epidemic was the first recorded case of plague within the continental borders of the United States. Because of the minuscule size and deadly effects of the pathogenic bacteria, *Yersinia pestis*, that yielded a high mortality rate ranging from 60 to 90 percent of all cases (112 fatalities out of 121 cases in the case of the San Francisco plague), bubonic plague subsequently functioned as a powerful metaphor for Americans through which they could articulate fears about all invisible enemies. Patients among the San Francisco bubonic plague were overwhelmingly Chinese, and their dead bodies were found mostly in Chinatown, the epicenter of the plague, which thereafter was subject to received numerous wash-up,

⁷ For a general history of Chinese immigration to the United States, see, e.g., Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History*; Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*.

fumigation, quarantine, and evacuation (McClain 454).⁸ Some physicians claimed that “whites in San Francisco were relatively immune to the threats of an Asiatic disease” (Craddock 135). They attributed “Chinese vulnerability to bubonic plague” to “their rice-based diet, the absence of animal protein leaving their bodies unable to fight off the disease,” in support of the concept of bubonic plague as an Asian disease (Kraut 85). Moreover, the Chinese were believed to take a limited amount of protein by “eating mice and rats, animals considered filthy and disease-carrying” (Lee 39)—an ugly racial slur that ends up conflating them with dangerous and polluting sources of epidemic disease.⁹

When the bubonic plague struck San Francisco again in 1907 and claimed 78 lives, of which almost all were non-Chinese, the myth of white immunity to the bubonic plague was broken (Kraut 96). Despite the knowledge that the fleas on rats were responsible for the epidemic, however, the medical scapegoating of Chinese immigrants persisted, re-igniting the Sinophobia that was so heightened during the previous decades and still extant in 1900. The fact that the San Francisco “black death” was spread by Chinese stowaways and rats on a ship departing from Hong Kong, as is the case of the St. Hubert bubonic plague, further connected the fear of deadly microbes particularly with

⁸ As Susan Craddock suggests in *City of Plagues: Disease, Poverty, and Deviance in San Francisco*, a series of actions by city authorities controlling the San Francisco Chinatown testifies to “the continued medical construction of disease as produced by place”—that is, the miasma theory—even when they had “the knowledge that plague was caused by a bacterium” (124).

⁹ In *Orientalists: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*, Robert G. Lee quotes one stanza of Luke Schoolcraft’s minstrel song, “Heathen Chinese,” that recounts an imagined Chinese cuisine.

Lady she am vellie good, make plenty chow chow
She live way up top side house,
Take a little pussy cat and a little bow bow
Boil em in a pot of stew wit a little mouse
Hi! hi! hi! (qtd. in 38)

the nativist fear of “yellow men.” Unlike contemporary race-specific diseases mentioned above, which ended up severing the racial ties with European immigrants as these people increasingly assimilated among the American population and dispersed geographically, bubonic plague continued to embody “the yellow peril,” a threat to American bodies and their home ground—the evidence showing that a medicalized fear was in part racially conditioned “neurotic anxiety” (Kraut 103-104). The Chinese in San Francisco were indeed scapegoats who were victimized to quell American doubts and fears.

In the context of colonialism, turn-of-the-century medical nativism was a manifestation of what Stephen Arata calls “the anxiety of reverse colonization,” that is, “a fear that their colonial ‘children’ will someday violate and infect them as they have infected their colonies” (623). Some people believed that the threat of “Asiatic” immigration, an invasion of the plague bacteria, was the product of U.S. acquisition of territories and colonies. “At the moment when the United States prepared to pick up ‘the white man’s burden’ in the Caribbean and the Pacific,” Robert G. Lee writes, “‘Asiatic immigration’ was said to pose ‘the great threat to Western civilization and the White Race’” (10). Arthur Dudley Vinton’s *Looking Further Backward*, the dystopian story of the Chinese military invasion of the United States discussed in Chapter II, is a good example illustrating a widespread fear of Chinese encroachment of American society. The concept of a racially specific disease, along with the theory of race suicide, contributed in some ways to support the period’s anti-imperialist movement, triggered by protest and criticism against the annexation of Hawai’i, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines in 1898 and Theodore Roosevelt’s “big stick” policies. Leaders and

members of the Anti-Imperialist League feared that America's overseas territorial expansion and subsequent encounter with plague-infected natives would necessitate the infection and infertility of American bodies as well as the abandonment of American ideals of self-government and non-intervention.

The pathological "anxiety of reverse colonization," however, also provided a great excuse for some American expansionists to aggressively compete in the race for tropical colonies. We have examined in the previous chapters on *Looking Backward* and "Melantha" the ways in which pseudo-scientific medical discourses invented systems of difference and contributed to maintaining the racial and sexual orders of turn-of-the-century America. Just as Anglo-Saxon men were exclusively liable to neurasthenia, and mulatto women to hysteria, Western colonizers were believed to be vulnerable to tropical diseases as a sign of their racial superiority. The fin-de-siècle discourse of immunology is, Haraway claims, "a map of systems of 'difference,'" a difference based on the racial hierarchies of Victorian anthropology and social Darwinism (204). The immune system is "a plan for meaningful action to construct and maintain the boundaries for what may count as self and other in the crucial realms of the normal and the pathological" (Haraway 204). The colonial logic of immunity assumed that, while "darker-skinned laborers had usually already acquired resistance," Westerners "required prophylaxis because of a presumed lack of exposure to tropical disease" (Stern 41). They could affirm their racial superiority and the integrity of the "normal" self by acquiring and maintaining immunity to tropical pathogens—"the parasites" which are the "relative ally of blacks" and "enemy of whites" (Latour 141). As W. J. T. Mitchell maintains,

immunology put “the limits, borders, boundaries of the body (politics), its relations of inside/outside, friend/enemy, native/alien,” into question and thereby occupied the central core of tropical medicine (916).

In this sense, as suggested in my Introduction, U.S. imperial invasion was basically a medical project, a necessary preventive measure, that safeguarded and promoted the health and morals of Americans faced with disease threats across and within borders. When Dr. Stokes, on first recognizing the outbreak of bubonic plague, asks Gottlieb for help, he suggests the possibility of a bacterial invasion of America: “The letter from Dr. Stokes was not his only intimation that plague was striding through St. Hubert, that to-morrow it might be leaping to Barbados, to the Virgin Island ... to New York” (A 355). When Gottlieb tells Martin, “It comes to me that there is pneumonic plague in Manchuria and bubonic in St. Hubert, in the West Indies” (A 366), he implies the global connection between two Chinese-related plagues and, therefore, the fear of yellow peril that works to launch the St. Hubert expedition. Martin’s plague expedition is in this way indicative of how American expansion in the tropical colonies had been a pre-emptive “medical” warfare for the acquisition of immunity against the supposed invasion of alien bacteria/barbarian and the consequent contamination of American bodies and soils.

3. Tropical Bacteriology: The Emissary of Empire

At the outset of the St. Hubert episode Lewis describes the greed and ignorance of the decayed, incompetent British ruling elites of the island, such as Governor Colonel

Sir Robert Fairlamb, Hon. Cecil Eric George Twyford, Kellett the Red Leg, and George William Vertigan, which invite and aggravate the epidemic. During the political feud with “the gambler, the lush, the smuggler, the liar” George William, Kellett, the leader of Scotch-Irishmen, whose faction controls the House of Assembly, passes an ordinance removing the melancholy Cockney, the official rat-catcher of St. Hubert. Ignoring George William’s petition for veto of the bill, Governor Fairlamb accepts Surgeon General Dr. R. E. Inchcape Jones’s irresponsible, short-sighted advice—“if Red Legs like Kellett longed to die of plague and rat-bite fever, why should decent people object”—and fires the rat-catcher (A 360). The rat-catcher becomes a chauffeur for American and Canadian tourists, and, as a consequence, rats flourish on the island. “[E]ach female [rat] produced from ten to two hundred offspring every year [and] lent their fleas to a species of ground squirrels which were plentiful about the village of Carib” (A 360). A year and a half later these “ten thousand glinty small eyes” spread the plague bacillus carried by the rats in the merchant ship moored at the pier and infected the entire population of St. Hubert. To make matters worse, despite the amateur bacteriologist and parish medical officer of St. Swithin Parish Dr. Stokes’s warning, Inchcape Jones overlooks the signs of plague “because there never was plague in St. Hubert” and makes “no quarantine, no official admission” about the plague for fear that it will ruin tourist and export business of the island (A 361-63). He later inquires of London officials about Haffkine’s anti-plague vaccine in vain, and Dr. Stokes secretly reports the plague “ready to flare up and consume all the West Indies” to Max Gottlieb,

then-director of the McGurk Institute, who reluctantly dispatches the McGurk Plague and Bacteriophage Commission headed by Martin to the Lesser Antilles (A 364).

The British officials' negligence and shortsightedness constitutes the characteristic establishing scene of outbreak narratives. Juxtaposed with the McGurk Commission's efforts toward systematic "modern warfare" with germs, their inability to control the plague in its early stages metaphorically foreshadows the decline of the British Empire and the hegemonic shift occurring in the Caribbean.

A plague epidemic to-day, in a civilized land, is no longer an affair of people dying in the streets and of drivers shouting "Bring out your dead." The fight against it is conducted like modern warfare, with telephones instead of foaming chargers. The ancient horror bears a face of efficiency. There are offices, card indices, bacteriological examinations of patients and of rats. There is, or should be, a lone director with superlegal powers. There are large funds, education of the public by placard and newspaper, brigades of rat-killers, a corps of disinfectors, isolation of patients lest vermin carry the germs from them to others. In most of these particulars Inchcape Jones had failed. (A 388)

Although Martin fails to scientifically "establish the value of bacteriophage in plague by tests on a large scale," his dedicated efforts to "outsavage the savage" bacteria are successful enough to be appropriated for imperial propaganda (A 415). On his return to New York, one newspaper "announces that America, which was always rescuing the world from something or other, had gone and done it again" (A 421). For Americans,

Martin's expedition is the "proof of their sacrifice and tender watchfulness" which testifies "how benevolent the United States had been to its Little Brothers—Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua" (A 421).

That the McGurk Plague and Bacteriophage Commission to the Lesser Antilles headed by Martin is modeled after the operation of the International Health Commission of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (hereafter IHC) in the 1910s-20s affirms its veiled role as an agent of American imperialism.¹⁰ The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease, founded by John D. Rockefeller and his advisor Frederick T. Gates in 1909, successfully operated in eleven Southern states, "setting up dispensaries and enticing whites and blacks to experience the salvation of modern medicine" (Palmer 64). Planning to embark on an international effort, they urged Senator Jacob H. Gallinger of New Hampshire to introduce in the Senate a bill to incorporate the Rockefeller Foundation to lend their enterprise an aura of prestige equivalent to the Carnegie Institution of Washington or the American Academy in Rome. But Congress denounced the bill—a natural decision for them considering Rockefeller's pernicious philanthropic meddling as shown in the case of the General Education Board and his blackened reputation, which had been intensified since Ida Tarbell's inflammatory history of Standard Oil appeared in *McClure's Magazine* in 1903.¹¹

¹⁰ Lewis's scientific collaborator and bacteriologist Paul de Kruif, who assisted the author by providing the medical information required by the plot, briefly worked for the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. As James E. Hutchisson notes, Lewis's portrayal and satire of the McGurk Institute was greatly influenced by de Kruif's first-hand experience at the Rockefeller Institute and his disenchantment with "the prevalence of commercialism in modern medicine" (50).

¹¹ See Steve Weinberg, *Taking on the Trust: The Epic Battle of Ida Tarbell and John D. Rockefeller*. American journalist John Temple Graves, jeering at John D. Rockefeller's

It was the newly elected President Woodrow Wilson who allowed Rockefeller to launch the IHC in 1913, the first subdivision of the philanthropic empire under the control of the oil magnate, which subsequently functioned to make people remember him as a great American philanthropist rather than as “the greatest criminal of our ages,” as Robert La Follette once called him (Ettling 186-87). Shortly before the First World War, North American capital flowed into Latin American countries, helping to consolidate an export economy based on raw materials. The Wilson administration wanted to “establish an American financial hegemony over the countries to the south,” pushing out “European private capital” from this region, America’s backyard and lake where, as stipulated by the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. had claimed to have paternal control against European intervention (Van Alstyne 168). Wilson had a penchant for teaching the people of Latin America democracy and building a constitutional government there as well. This might explain in part Wilson’s approval of the IHC, a potential foothold for the Rockefeller’s monopolistic trade practices in this region, which contravened his administration’s antitrust legislation such as the Clayton Antitrust Act and the Federal Trade Commission Act enacted in 1914.¹²

philanthropist efforts, compared him to Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* as example of those who led early lives of crime and escaped into virtue and beneficence (Ettling 181).

¹² When Martin works as a country doctor in Wheatsylvania and is about to meet Sondelius, who introduces the public health crusade to him, the narrator weaves comments about the important political events of 1912 into the storyline: “In the autumn of 1912, when Mr. Debs, Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Taft were campaigning for the presidency, when Martin Arrowsmith had lived in Wheatsylvania for a year and a half, Bert Tozer[Leora’s brother] became a Prominent Booster” (A 172). With respect to Martin, who later assumes a research position of the McGurk Institute and heads the Institute’s St. Hubert plague expedition—that is, the Caribbean project of the IHC—the seemingly digressive comment about the 1912 presidential election is a harbinger of Martin’s coming career as a medical researcher.

The Rockefeller directors clearly understood their role of maintaining a stable world trade system and protecting the health of U.S. investments, properties and personnel in Latin America, while they were publicly insistent that the IHC not be seen as a handmaiden and naked extension of U.S. imperialism (Cueto 2-3; Palmer 79). When the First World War broke out in Europe in 1914, the British Colonial Office could not afford to control significant parts of its tropical territories in the West Indies and Central America. Established under the directorship of a veteran of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, Hector H. Howard, the IHC launched the public health campaign in the Caribbean islands by dispatching a cadre of trained operatives who took over medical authority from the British Colonial Office in this region (Palmer 86-88; Worboys 74).

The IHC operations were commonly performed by a limited number of medical practitioners lacking state authority—except for the public health campaigns in the U.S. tropical possessions of Cuba and Panama, places that were inextricably related to American profits—in order to avoid creating the perception that the Rockefeller Institute was part of the U.S. foreign policy presence (Palmer 11). In this sense, the McGurk Plague and Bacteriophage Commission, the three-member team composed of Martin, Leora, and, the self-proclaimed “captain-general of rat-killers” Sondelius, recapitulates the adjunctive role of the IHC operations. Indeed, the leading role of the philanthropic private sector in overseas medical campaigns made it possible to flexibly decentralize institutional authority and transfer the responsibility for the program to local agencies of the host polities, and thereby to mask America’s desire to become a master of Latin America.

Beginning in British Guiana with the treatment of hookworm in 1914, the IHC expanded their boundaries to Egypt, Ceylon, and the Malay States under British control as a token of Anglo-Saxon collaboration.¹³ Adopting what Howard dubbed the “American method” that creates a “biographical grid” of the area to be worked based on a complete census and an examination of a stool sample from every individual registered, the IHC produced a higher rate of cure than its British predecessor and built an international health regime that outstripped the state-led International Sanitary Bureau, as well as the French-based Office International d’Hygiène and the British Colonial Office (Palmer 57-58).¹⁴ The triumphs of American medicine over tropical disease no doubt fortified the United States’ control over the Western Hemisphere as well as the truth of Manifest Destiny and established a new relationship with Great Britain and other European empires, who rapidly lost their foothold in this area after the outbreak of the First World War.¹⁵ Considering the medical campaign’s significant role in supporting

¹³ The fact that the guest of honor of the McGurk Scientific Dinner, which Arrowsmith attends for the first time since joining the McGurk Institute, was “Major-General Sir Isaac Mallard, the London surgeon, who was in America with a British War Mission,” suggests the IHC’s British connection (A 309).

¹⁴ According to Steven Palmer, whereas “the British method had grown out of plantation colonialism, with medical authorities endlessly overseeing the treatment of estate laborers,” the American method “understood eradication to be an objective that could only be achieved through the treatment of all bodies within a polity,” being a more efficient and inexpensive yet less disciplinary method than the former (75). Also, unlike the British physicians who adopted “vertical” approaches that targeted the control of single diseases, the IHC launched “horizontal” approaches to health that installed a “‘health unit’ in each district, offering a full range of preventive services from health education and child welfare through to the control of infectious diseases” (Worboys 75).

¹⁵ It is also true that the international public health operation of the Rockefeller Institute marked “the convergence of two separate tributaries of American philanthropy: scientific medicine and public education” (Ettling vii), and therefore resonated with President Wilson’s Progressive banner of efficiency, improvement, and hygiene which encouraged the application of wide-ranging scientific knowledge for the public education and optimization of American society. For

the increased presence of U.S. interests in this region, no wonder that letters from anonymous, “public-spirited” Americans implore Gottlieb, who was at first unwilling to dispatch the McGurk Plague and Bacteriophage Commission to St. Hubert, to act,

“Can you stand by, with the stuff of salvation in your hands, and watch thousands of these unfortunate people dying in St. Hubert, and what is more, are you going to let the dreaded plague gain a foothold in the Western hemisphere? My dear man, this is the time to come out of your scientific reverie and act!” (A 366).

The passage about Dr. Stokes’s request letter is immediately followed by a description of the political and economic power of Ross McGurk, “an emperor of the new era, better served than any cloistered satrap of old,” whose “skippers looked in at a hundred ports, ... railroads penetrated jungles, ... [and] correspondents whispered to him of the next election in Colombia, of the Cuban cane-crop” (A 365). It is also suggested that “the compulsion of McGurk” might lead Gottlieb to send the Commission to St. Hubert against his will (A 366). In an earlier section of the novel, Lewis describes the Latin American-themed McGurk Building and surrounding street that Martin beholds on his first visit to the McGurk Institute and proposes the spirit of commercialism that rules his workplace.

He came along Cedar Street, among thunderous trucks portly with wares from all the world; came to the bronze doors of the McGurk Building and

a comprehensive account of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, see, e.g., George W. Corner, *A History of the Rockefeller Institute, 1901-1953: Origin and Growth* 1-29; John Ettling, *The Germ of Laziness: Rockefeller Philanthropy and Public Health in the New South* 178-208.

a corridor of intemperately colored terra-cotta, with murals of Andean Indians, pirates booming up the Spanish Main, guarded gold-trains, and the stout walls of Cartagena. At the Cedar Street end of the corridor, a private street, one block long, was the Bank of the Andes and Antilles (Ross McGurk chairman of the board), in whose gold-crusted sanctity red-headed Yankee exporters drew drafts on Quito, and clerks hurled breathless Spanish at bulky woman. A sign indicated, at the Liberty Street end, "Passenger Offices, McGurk Line, Weekly sailings for the West Indies and South America." (A 289)

Martin catches "half-second glimpses of ground glass doors with the signs of mining companies, lumber companies, Central American railroad companies" from an elevator on his way to the Institute, which takes up the twenty-ninth and thirtieth floors of the McGurk Building (A 289). That "The McGurk Institute is probably the only organization for scientific research in the world which is housed in an office building" spatially highlights the subordinate role of the Institute and its medical knowledge, which, as in the case of the Rockefeller Institute to Medical Research, serves to safeguard U.S. economic interests overseas, particular in Latin America, in the name of philanthropic health campaign and the acquisition of immunity (A 290). In this sense, by juxtaposing the sentences about Dr. Stokes's letter and McGurk, the magnate of colonial industry, Lewis intimates to the reader that the fear of contagion and penetration is being utilized to mask the commercialism permeating American expansion and imperialism as well as the veiled role of the Institute.

As James M. Hutchisson notes, unlike his other novels, such as *Main Street* (1920), *Babbitt* (1922), and *It Can't Happen Here* (1935), laden with instinctively satirical impulses, *Arrowsmith* contains a limited amount of satirical material “that to some degree undercut, digressed from, or obscured the theme of idealism” (57). When revising the typescript of the novel, Lewis had deleted several satirical passages about the McGurk Institute and its personnel: for example, he discarded the character of Wallace Umstead, the head of the “Dept of Pyschometrics and Teleological Psych” of the McGurk Institute, for fear that it would make “McGurk at least partly absurd that it should have such a dept” and curb the significance of Martin’s disenchantment with the Institute that guides his path to scientific idealism (qtd. in Hutchisson 59). The remnants of his satirical wit are, however, still found, particularly when he spilled “the secret of the Institute,” which was nothing but Ross McGurk’s wife, Capitola’s pastime:

Martin may not have learned much in the matter of anti-bodies but he did learn the secret of the Institute, and he saw that behind all its quiet industriousness was Capitola McGurk, the Great White Uplifter.

Capitola, Mrs. Ross McGurk, had been opposed to woman suffrage—until she learned that women were certain to get the vote—but she was a complete controller of virtuous affairs. Ross McGurk had bought the Institute not only to glorify himself but to divert Capitola and keep her itching fingers out of his shipping and mining and lumber interests, which would not too well have borne the investigations of a Great White Uplifter. (A 307)

As a researcher at the McGurk Institute, Martin has an obligation to attend “the monthly dinners which she[Capitola] gave at the Institute,” despite her husband’s objection, and there he has to explain “to golden cooing ladies, in a few words, just what they were up to and what in the next twenty years they hoped to be up to” (A 309). On visiting the Institute, one of the “golden cooing ladies” exclaims, “Oh, the poor little guinea pigs and darling rabbicks! [sic] Now honestly, Doctor, don’t you think it would be ever so much nicer if you let them go free, and just worked with your test-tubes?” (A 310). Capitola likewise says to Martin, “The trouble with scientists is that they do not understand beauty” (A 342).

Lewis’s satire mocks and dismisses the scientific professionalism that Martin’s workplace is meant to represent. The humor of satire, however, as Dustin Griffin demonstrates in *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, often simplifies or exaggerates the object of the satire to sharpen its ridicule on it (36). There is always a strong sense of efficiency in satire which enables the satirist to assume certainty in his moral position and thereby to make a sharp difference between vice and virtue, yet which at the same time defines satire as a single-minded rhetoric that often fails to uncover many layers of meanings associated with the targeted “vice” and its real danger. Lewis’s mockery of the McGurk Institute as Capitola’s leisure is the case with single-minded efficiency. It functions to mask not only commercialism ruling the McGurk/Rockefeller Institute, but also its more controversial role as “the hallmark of a U.S. global hegemony that largely eschewed formal empire,” as Steven Palmer points out in light of the IHC’s campaigns, in the formation of American imperialism (11).

4. Biopolitics: Martin Arrowsmith the Eugenacist

If Martin exists under “The Shadow of Max Gottlieb,” another Lewis’s possible titles for the novel, Gottlieb has been under the shadow of Robert Koch throughout his life (*Letters* 137). It was “Koch’s discoveries [that] drew” Gottlieb “into biology” (A 127). In his earlier days “he worked in the laboratories of Koch, of Pasteur” (A 127), had “a signed portrait of Koch” in his cottage (A 87), named his son “Robert Koch Gottlieb” (A 131), and blessed Martin by saying, “May Koch bless you!” (A 293). Koch was the influential bacteriologist-imperialist, as mentioned above, whose racialized framing of tropical pathology had backed up the theoretical and physical causes of imperialism. After brief period in Koch’s laboratory, for example, American bacteriologist Joseph Kinyoun headed the Marine Hospital Service lab at the Angel Island quarantine station and, with a serious interest in the relationship of immigration and disease, exploited the Chinese as guinea pigs of Haffkine’s vaccine, whose side effects were known to be severe, during the San Francisco bubonic plague (Kraut 89). Being under the shadow of Gottlieb, Martin walks in the footsteps of Koch and Kinyoun.¹⁶ He “swore by Jacques Loeb that he would observe test conditions; he would determine forever the value of phage by the contrast between patients treated and untreated” (A 366).¹⁷ By letting St.

¹⁶ de Kruif wrote in his memoir *The Sweeping Mind* that the Gottlieb character is “a blend of gaily wisecracking Jacques Loeb and the dedicated truth hunter ... Frederick G. Novy” (93-94). Interestingly, Novy was a member of the U.S. Commission to Study Bubonic Plague in San Francisco in 1901, where he examined and confirmed reported cases of plague (Craddock 137; Kraut 96).

¹⁷ According to the typescript of *Arrowsmith* housed in the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, Lewis replaced the sentence, “Martin swore by Pasteur ...,” with “Martin swore by Jacques Loeb ...” (Sinclair Lewis Family Papers, box 1, folder 5, 592). Considering that Louis Pasteur was, alongside Koch, the representative bacteriologist-imperialist of late nineteenth century Europe, as Latour demonstrates in *The Pasteurization of France*, this

Hubert natives die as human guinea pigs, he plays his role as an agent of “biopolitics” who takes “control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species” (Foucault, “*Society*” 246-47).

In the series of lectures collected in “*Society Must Be Defended*,” Foucault connected the birth of “biopower” at the end of eighteenth century to a crisis in sovereignty, a power mechanism of discipline by which the right of death exercises its right of life. While sovereignty consists in the power of taking life and letting live, biopolitics wields authority through the power to make live and let die. Biopower assumes “the right to intervene to make live” or “to improve life by eliminating accidents, the random element, and deficiencies” and guarantees the continuous living of man-as-species by asking “no question relating to an individual body, in the way that discipline does” (Foucault, “*Society*” 246-48). The purpose of biopolitics is not to distinguish life, which leads to the sacrifice of one part of it to the violent domination of the other, but to save it, protect it, and develop it. It “no longer recognizes death” and “literally ignores death” (Foucault, “*Society*” 248).

While the focus of biopolitics is centered on the care of life, death still remains outside the life-developing mechanism; political power cannot exist without a “power to kill, to call for deaths, to demand deaths, to give the order to kill, and to expose not only its enemies but its own citizens to the risk of death” (Foucault, “*Society*” 254). In the realms of biopolitics, “the death of others makes one biologically stronger insofar as one is a member of a race or population” (Foucault, “*Society*” 258). For the immunization of

revision might be considered as one example showing Lewis’s efforts to uphold Martin’s scientific idealism and to prevent the possible colonial reading of his novel.

the population, writes Roberto Esposito, “[j]ust as in every medical immunization,” “an antigenic nucleus” should be injected “into the social body, which is designed to activate protective antibodies. Doing so, however, it infects the organism in preventive fashion, weakening its primogenital forces: it risks killing what it is meant to keep alive” (*Bios* 92). “Nevertheless,” Esposito continues, “it is what the ascetic priest or the pastor of soul does with regard to the sick flock: ‘He brings salves and balsam, there is no doubt; but he needs to wound before he can cure; then, in relieving the pain he has inflicted, *he poisons the wound*’” (*Bios* 92). From this perspective, inscribing Nazi thanatopolitics in the project of immunizing life through the production of death, Esposito demonstrates how the death of the Jews became both the object and the therapeutic instrument for curing the German body politic.¹⁸

Gottlieb likewise appreciates the need for wound/death and its therapeutic function. His “philosophy of the mechanistic conception of life”—a virtue de Kruif attributed to Jacques Loeb upon whom the Gottlieb character was built (109)—epitomizes the essence of biopolitics’ “let die” policy.

He was of the great benefactors of humanity. There will never, in any age, be an effort to end the great epidemics of the petty infections which will not have been influence by Max Gottlieb’s researches, for he was not one who tagged and prettily classified bacteria and protozoa. ... Yet they were right who called him “pessimist,” for this man who, as much as any

¹⁸ For Esposito’s analysis of Nazi biopolitics/thanatopolitics, see *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* 110-45. Timothy Campbell’s article, “*Bios*, Immunity, Life: The Thought of Roberto Esposito,” provides a comprehensive exposition of this topic as well as Esposito’s thoughts about the relationship between immunity and community.

other, will have been the cause of reducing infectious diseases to almost-zero often doubted the value of reducing infectious diseases at all.

He reflected ... that half a dozen generations nearly free from epidemics would produce a race so low in natural immunity that when a great plague, suddenly springing from almost-zero to a world-smothering cloud, appeared again, it might wipe out the world entire, so that the measures to save lives to which he lent his genius might in the end be the destruction of all human life. (A 129)

For him death is the only medicine able to safeguard life and, therefore, it is inevitable and indispensable that some die as guinea pigs for the rest of the population.¹⁹ Perhaps because Gottlieb believes that the whole race can survive by constantly letting some people die from plague and, as a consequence, acquiring immunity from it, “he who had lived to study the methods of immunizing mankind against disease had little interest in actually using those methods” (A 365).

According to Foucault, it was racism, as in the case of Nazi thanatopolitics, that introduced “the break between what must live and what must die” (“*Society*” 254). “[E]stablishing a biological-type caesura within a population that appears to be a biological domain,” racism built “a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is not military or warlike relationship of confrontation, but a biological-type

¹⁹ In his earlier days at the University of Winnemac, where he teaches bacteriology and immunology and meet Martin for the first time, Professor Gottlieb meditates as he infects a guinea pig with anthrax germs: “Wretched innocent! Why should I murder him, to teach *Dummköpfe*? It would be better to experiment on that fat young man” (A 36). Considering his pessimistic belief in the need for human guinea pigs, it is not surprising for him to make such a statement.

relationship” (Foucault, “*Society*” 255). This explains why tropical colonies like St. Hubert (or the Chinatown in San Francisco), densely saturated with racist ideologies as well as fever and dysentery, became a representative “pasteurized” domain of biopolitics where the medical knowledge of the physician administered a decisive political intervention-technique to colonized peoples for the discovery of pathogenic bacteria and the immunization of the Western colonizers. Natives existed not as enemies to be destroyed but only as bodies, the only element that makes all individuals into man-as-species, that perished from plague by themselves—a natural death, not originating from war or conquest, which disguised the violence of imperialism.

Martin’s biopolitical practices in the tropical colony, tainted by the twin scourges of racism and imperialism, stigmatize him as an *American* physician-politician who, “instead of pursuing politics with politics,” is unwittingly “pursuing it with *other means*” (Latour 142). Emphasizing the significance of “untreated cases” or “controls” in his experiment that would improve life in the end, he “ignores [the possible] death” of these untreated patients. He just lets them die, rather than takes their life.²⁰

Throughout the novel Lewis portrays Martin’s efforts to distance himself from “Men of Measured Merriment,” physicians like Ira Hinkley, Angus Duer, A. DeWitt Tubbs, Rippleton Holabird and Almus Pickerbaugh, who, indulging in ignorance, greed,

²⁰ “Like most white Americans, Martin had talked a great deal about the inferiority of negroes and had learned nothing whatever about them” (A 387). Thus, he “never thought a negro doctor” could ever exist (A 387). Although he is fascinated by intelligence and passion of a dedicated black doctor Dr. Oliver Marchand in St. Hubert, “forgetting the plague, forgetting the more cruel plague of race-fear,” the black doctor, as the narrator describes him as “a beautiful young animal” (A 388), is still perceived as a bodily existence who, like other St. Hubert natives, would perish as one of untreated “controls” (and indeed he dies of plague), thus making Martin more literally into an agent of zoopolitics, which considers people as a mere living being, not far from an animal.

and commercialism, seek nothing but “Money, Decoration, Titles” (A 344). In this sense, Martin’s retreat to the Vermont woods, his resignation from his privileged positions as the head of the Department of Microbiology in the McGurk Institute as well as the husband of the wealthy wife Joyce at the denouement of the novel represents the author’s “affirmative view of the heroic in modern man” (Hutchisson 61). (The McGurk Institute and Joyce share one thing in common: their wealth was in part founded upon an exploitative industry in tropical colonies.) Martin is “a hero of whom [Lewis] approve[s] as one of the bases of civilization” (*Letters* 142),²¹ a character rarely seen in his other novels, such as *Our Mr. Wrenn* (1914), *The Trail of the Hawk* (1915), *The Job* (1917), *Main Street*, and *Babbitt*, which “contain a clear pattern” in which “a representative American artist-figure (in various forms) who pursues an idealistic vision, is defeated by his environment, renounces his earlier idealism, then retreats back into reality and thereby metaphorically perishes” (Hutchisson 61).

From the perspective of biopolitics, however, he is hardly distinguishable from an opportunistic public-health official like Pickerbaugh through which the state brandishes extensive power of life and death. As the director of Public Health in the city of Nautilus, Iowa, Pickerbaugh compiles “figures on bad teeth, careless motoring, tuberculosis, and seven other afflictions alone,” which suggest, according to his assistant Martin’s estimation, that “every person in the city had a one hundred and eighty per cent

²¹ This expression comes from Alfred Harcourt’s 1 October 1923 letter to Lewis, in which he showed his preference of *Martin Arrowsmith* over *Dr. Arrowsmith* for the title of the novel: “For the short view, it[*Dr. Arrowsmith*] saves saying a thousand or more times that the hero is a doctor. The world pretty much knows now that your father was a small-town doctor, and it would readily connote to a good many thousands of people a more than glowing story with a hero of whom you approve as one of the bases of civilization” (*Letters* 142).

chance of dying before the age of sixteen” (A 236). The numerous medical and hygienic health campaigns he launches conceivably based on such figures, such as Osteopathy Week, Eat More Corn Week, Banish the Booze Week, Tougher Teeth Week, Stop the Spitter Week, Swat the Fly Week, and Three Cigars a Day Week (A 232-34), demonstrate how biopower’s claim for the care of life actually depended upon fear, coercion, and disciplinary authority. Working with Pickerbaugh in Nautilus before joining the McGurk Institute, “Martin was enthusiastic during Better Babies Week” and “weighed babies, examined them, made out diet charts” (A 235). Yet he denounces his chief’s campaign of “More Babies Week,” arguing for the necessity of “birth-control” (A 235).

Like Pickerbaugh, who “answered [Martin’s doubt about the campaign] with theology, violence, and the example of his own eight beauties” (A 235), most American intellectuals of the 1920s were opposed to birth control, an idea which still bore the mark of radicalism closely connected to Margaret Sanger’s reproductive rights movement. Seeing it as “responsible for the low birthrate,” they believed that “the separation of sex from reproduction would undermine public morality” (Kline 63-64). On the other hand, some eugenicists believed that, if used scientifically, birth-control would play a significant role in the broad program of “family regulation in the interests of the parents, the offspring, and the race” and “result in healthier marriage, better babies, and therefore, a healthier race” (Kline 66, 70).

According to Foucault, birth control features “the beginnings of a natalist policy [of biopolitics, which] plans to intervene in all phenomena relating to the birth rate”

(“*Society*” 243). “The study of control of conception,” argued Dr. Robert Latou Dickinson, the renowned early twentieth-century American gynecologist, “cannot be dissociated from consideration of sterility, sterilization, and an attempt at definition of normal in sex life” (qtd. in Kline 66). The birth control movement indeed paved the way for legitimizing the sterilization of “mentally and morally deficient” women in the late 1920s and 1930s, as described by Dickinson, who “inserted a wire called a ‘cautery sound’ into the vagina, through the cervix, and into the uterus, where he burned the corners of the uterine wall to block entry to the fallopian tubes” as easily as “the dentist’s clearing of a cavity” (qtd. in Kline 66). Eugenicists believed that sterilization alongside birth control would “safeguard the racial health of communities and ensure that American civilization would continue to progress” (Kline 81). Rejecting the appeal of Carrie Buck, a girl from Virginia sentenced to be sterilized after having been judged “weak in the mind,” along with other 8,300 citizens of Virginia defined as “poor white trash,” Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who himself was an eugenicist, claimed in 1927: “It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. The principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the Fallopian tubes” (qtd. in Esposito, *Bios* 132).²²

²² On the significance of female sterilization and the *Buck v. Bell* case, the representative organized resistance to compulsory sterilization law, in the history of American eugenic practices in the 1920s-30s, see Mark A. Largent, *Breeding Contempt: the History of Coerced Sterilization in the United States*; Nancy Ordover, *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism* 125-205.

No account of the motives of Martin's endorsement of the doctrine of birth-control is provided. Regardless of his intention, however, it confirms him as an eugenicist because "the ideas and goals of the birth control and eugenics movements overlapped considerably" (Kline 64). Eugenicists employed two different approaches for the betterment of the national stock: "negative eugenics" which attempted "to free future generations from avoidable genetically transmitted handicaps, and "positive eugenics" which sought to "raise the overall genetic quality of the nation by ensuring a superior birth rate among the genetically better-endowed" (Pearson 57-58). "Regardless of their individual positions," writes Wendy Kline, "the debate generated by eugenicists regarding promiscuity and procreation helped to legitimize female sexual desire and the birth-control movement" and, therefore, the purpose and foundation of biopolitical sovereignty (64). Likewise, Martin and Pickerbaugh, though seen as irreconcilable opposites, equally serve the cunning of the biopolitical state. Whereas Pickerbaugh's health campaigns embody the "positive eugenics," the "make live" policy of biopolitics, Martin's adherence to birth-control, as well as "control," represents a "negative eugenics," the "let die" or, to be accurate, the "let not be born" policy.

A biopolitical reading of *Arrowsmith* provides a new perspective on the final pages of the novel which, often read as Lewis's final statement of his pessimism over contemporary American society as well as his loyalty to idealism, offer a stark contrast between the success of "Men of Measured Merriment" and the uncompromising life and death of authentic truth-seekers.

On a certain evening of May, Congressman Almus Pickerbaugh was dining with the President of the United States. “When the campaign is over, Doctor,” said the President, “I hope we shall see you a cabinet-member—the first Secretary of Health and Eugenics in the country!” That evening, Dr. Rippleton Holabird was addressing a meeting of celebrated thinkers, assembled by the League of Cultural Agencies. Among the men of measured merriment on the platform were Dr. Aaron Sholtheis, the new Director of McGurk Institute, and Dr. Angus Duer, head of the Duer Clinic and professor of surgery in Fort Dearborn Medical College. ... That evening, Max Gottlieb sat unmoving and alone, in a dark small room above banging city street. Only his eyes were alive. That evening, the hot breeze languished along the palm-waving ridge [in St. Hubert] where the ashes of Gustaf Sondelius were lost among cinders, and a depression in a garden marked the grave of Leora. ... That evening, Martin Arrowsmith and Terry Wickett lolled in a clumsy boat, an extraordinary uncomfortable boat, far out on the water. I feel as if I were really beginning to work now,” said Martin. “This new quinine stuff may prove pretty good. We’ll plug along on it for two or three years, and maybe we’ll get something permanent—and probably we’ll fail! (A 470-71)

Constituting one of many parts forming a revealing panoramic view of the fate and whereabouts of different types of people, Martin no longer occupies an exclusive focal point. Claiming himself as an American “farmer” (A 469) he embodies rural, agrarian,

frontier values and pioneer traditions which, together with the urban, industrial, commercial values represented by the Men of Measured Merriment, shaped the life and landscape of America in the first half of the twentieth century.²³

Besides, this passage draws the geo-biopolitical map of the society in which the death of Others—the Swedish doctor Sondelius, the disobedient woman Leora and, though not mentioned, the black doctor Oliver Marchand and many St. Hubert natives killed by the plague—in the colonial peripheries (including the upcoming death of the decrepit and aged German Gottlieb) upholds the life of native-stock Americans in the imperial center.²⁴ The ashes of the dead blown off in the wind in St. Hubert emerge as both the infectious germs and the immunitary agents which, by being destroyed, give immunity to the social body of the American empire. Announcing at the outset the establishment of the Department of Health and Eugenics and Pickerbaugh's being promised the position of its first Secretary by the President of the United States, this passage not only reaffirms the theme of biopolitics that runs throughout *Arrowsmith*, but

²³ Considering that American eugenics had its start in agriculture when its first organization was born of the collaboration between the American Breeders Association, the Minnesota Agricultural Station, and the School of Agriculture at Cornell University, Martin's self-definition as a farmer seems to be linked to his eugenic commitments. Posing the question of continuity between plants, animals, and human beings, Charles B. Davenport and Harry Laughlin, the fathers of the discipline, created a new center of genetic experimentation, the Eugenics Record Office in 1910, funded and underwritten by the Rockefeller family, which was committed to the study of heredity in humans (Esposito, *Bios* 130-31).

²⁴ The long passage of contrast quoted above omits the story of Bert Tozer in Wheatsylvania, who is listening to the minister in church while "his new Buick sedan awaited him outside" and the story of Joyce Lanyon, who, complaining of Martin's egoism, promises to marry Latham Ireland, another "man of measured merriment," once she divorces her husband. Though not directly applicable to my biopolitical reading of the passage, their stories also demonstrate the success of a positive eugenics which produces self-complacent Americans who are able to obtain "modest satisfaction" from vanity, consumption, and religion (A 470).

also heralds a coming era of eugenics in which the national state played a principal role in instituting hereditarian ideas and practices both inside and outside the United States.

Coda

Combining a fear of foreigners as carriers of disease and filth with a spatial anxiety generated by the closure of frontier and further by the sense of belatedness on the imperial expansion, institutionalized tropical medicine that functioned to mark constitutive biological and cultural difference between colonizers and colonized. Tampering with the American racial fear, tropical medicine looked upon the American vulnerability to tropical disease paradoxically as the proof of their racial superiority, as in the case of neurasthenia, and produced the image of the tropical native as a potential invader, a threat not only to the public health but also to national security. It is no doubt true that, as discussed in the third section of the chapter, an economic motive was driving turn-of-the-century U.S. imperial expansion as well as the establishment of tropical medicine. More importantly, tropical medicine, though founded in colonial peripheries as the derivatives of the project for colonization, also laid the cornerstone of the biopolitical control of the American continent in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Inheriting the ungrounded fears that formulated the medical discourse of neurasthenia and hysteria and, later, of infectious and communicable disease like bubonic plague, the eugenic practices of biopolitics in this period worked, as suggested by Justice Holmes's understanding of sterilization as vaccination, as "the immunitary therapy that aims at preventing or extirpating the pathological agents that jeopardize the biological quality of

future generations” (Esposito, *Bios* 128). Indeed, the rise of biopolitics marked the culmination of the political productivity of pathological fear that revealed its presence in the pseudo-scientific discourse of medicine and disease.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In his first inaugural address in March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt, diagnosing the causes of the Great Depression that resulted in a staggering 25% unemployment rate, the closure of more than 11,000 banks, and an ever-widening gap between rich and poor, blamed the business community for incompetence, greed, and unethical practices. Drawing “by far the greatest applause from a sober-minded audience,” as a *New York Herald Tribune* article on the following day wrote, his indictment of the money changers garnered overwhelmingly favorable reaction from the public and the press. Reflecting the desires of the public sparked by the address, Congress passed the Emergency Banking Act on March 9, just five days after the inaugural address, which, along with other “Hundred Days” legislation, became the backbone of the New Deal.

Considered by many to be “one of the President’s truly great speeches, not only in form and substance but in accomplishment” and “one of those immortal statements which have since become so closely associated with him,” FDR’s speech is particularly memorable for its penetrating diagnosis of the fear that plagued Depression America (Rosenman 89).

This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive

and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

(Roosevelt 11)

The fear statement aimed, as revealed in FDR's note appended to the speech, "to banish, as far as possible, the fear of the present and of the future which held American people and the American spirit in its grip" and, more specifically, "to dissipate the fear and panic which had laid a paralyzing hand upon the finances, the business, the industry and the agriculture of the Nation" (16). A variety of sources claim themselves as the origin of the now-famous line, "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror." Halford Ross Ryan identifies the possible three sources, among others: first, Roosevelt's own phrase, or, more accurately, his personal secretary Louis Howe's, who dictated a beginning paragraph for the third draft of the speech in which the fear statement first appears; second, Henry David Thoreau's journal of 7 September 1851, in which he wrote, "Nothing is to be so much feared as fear"; third, a January 1932 editorial in *Ladies' Home Journal* which claimed "There is nothing to fear—except fear" (138).¹

¹ These assumptions on the origin of the fear statement are from, in order, John Gunther, *Roosevelt in Retrospect* 124, Samuel I. Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* 91, and Dixon Wecter, *The Age of the Great Depression 1929-1942* 44. I think that Rosenman's hypothesis is the most plausible explanation, considering that, according to Eleanor Roosevelt, Roosevelt was given a copy of Thoreau's writings shortly before his inauguration and that the book was in his suite at the Hotel Mayflower while this speech was being polished (Ryan 91). For me, however, scholars' indifference to Michel de Montaigne's celebrated words, "The thing I fear most is fear," is striking (53).

Undermining the threat of impending economic disaster that “held American people and the American spirit in its grip,” FDR’s fear statement implies that all the objects that his fellow Americans feared are in fact imagined or exaggerated. Its stringent emphasis upon the evasiveness and unsubstantiality of the fear object, as in the expression “nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror,” suggests the nature of anxiety, or Freudian “neurotic anxiety,” which does not always accompany an object to be dreaded. When FDR uttered the stirring words of warning that the only thing Americans have to fear is fear itself, however, he was inadvertently overlooking the danger of objectless fear, which is more threatening because it paralyzes people and renders them unable to act in self-serving ways, due to the lack of the object from which they seek “flight and isolation.” He refrained from pointing out that objectless fear necessarily instigates people to identify the object of fear. It means that whatever the plausibility of the assumptions about its origin, FDR’s fear statement is built on blindness to the productive power of fear, which, once activated, triggers a series of threats regardless of the existence of a substantial object to be feared.

As noted in the previous chapter, fear of fear, along with other nonsensical fears like fear of everything, constitute the symptoms of neurasthenia and hysteria, working to expose the imaginative nature of these mental diseases. I therefore (mis)construe FDR’s unwitting invitation to fear fear itself as a reenactment of the logic of turn-of-the-century medical theories which created the symptoms, signs, and fears of disease by pathologizing certain behaviors and desires—the complex dynamics of fear which I have undertaken to disclose in this dissertation. I explored how turn-of-the-century American

fear of racial and sexual difference and of spatial enclosure and isolation underlay the pseudo-scientific discourses of neurasthenia, hysteria, and bubonic plague, and how selected American literary products portrayed the symptoms and treatments of these diseases as a way to express the era's anxieties about the failure of traditional social institutions. Diagnosing Edward Bellamy's sleepless hero in *Looking Backward 2000-1887* as a neurasthenic, the epitome of the bodily weakness and racial superiority of the Anglo-Saxon American, Chapter II has examined the ways that contemporary racial ideas and medical and hygienic theories worked together to shape the design of the ethnocentric utopia in his novel. In the following chapter, I argued that Melantha in her namesake short story by Gertrude Stein was modeled on the representative characteristics of a hysterical woman through which Anglo-Saxon American men reconfirmed their privileged position in the traditional U.S. sexual and racial hierarchy. Focusing on the bubonic plague that swept into the Western U.S. with a vengeance in the 1900s and represented the alien (Asiatic) threat to the American body and body politic, Chapter IV has read Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith* as a narrative of an American imperialist doctor whose quest for immunity laid the foundation of the empire and its biopolitical sovereignty.

I also (mis)construe that FDR's fear statement foreshadows forms of mass hysteria that gripped early to mid twentieth-century American society. Continuing the nativist trend that has well established by the early twentieth century, a general mood of hysteria about foreign espionage and invasion grew during the two World Wars—as

epitomized by Japanese American internment after the attack on Pearl Harbor²—and culminated in the Cold War. The Cold War hysteria over the “red menace,” nuclear attack, brainwashing, cancer, water fluoridation, and so on, was built on, to varying degrees, people’s ungrounded fear of fear, which FDR unknowingly encouraged, and extensively adopted the language of contagion and infection, as in the case of the turn-of-the-century American dis-ease over immigrants, women’s advancement, and the closure of the frontier. The FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover’s 1947 testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), for example, illustrates how Cold War rhetoric utilized the disease metaphor to emphasize the importance of identifying communists:

I feel that once public opinion is thoroughly aroused as it is today, the fight against communism is well on its way. Victory will be assured once communists are identified and exposed, because the public will take the first step of quarantining them so they can do no harm. Communism, in reality, is not a political party. It is a way of life—an evil and malignant way of life. It reveals a condition akin to disease that spreads like an

² Around 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, there was a “blind, wild, hysterical hatred of all persons who can trace their ancestry to Japan” in the United States. The FBI had taken almost 1,300 Issei (first-generation Japanese immigrant) individuals, potential spies and agents, into custody immediately after the bombing, and the U.S Navy forced more than 110,000 Nikkei (Japanese immigrants and their descendants) residents of Terminal Island, California, and Bainbridge Island, Washington, to leave the strategically located islands. Forced to sell their possessions, farms, and businesses, close up their homes, and leave their friends, they were segregated and taken to confinement camps, mandated by federal internment policy (Rast 80-83). For a discussion of this event, see Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960*; Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H. L. Kitano, eds., *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*. John Okada’s 1957 novel *No-No Boy* provides glimpses into the fear and malignant hatred faced by Japanese Americans in this period.

epidemic and like an epidemic a quarantine is necessary to keep it from infecting the Nation. (qtd. in Powers 289)

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to map out precisely the rhetorical strategies of Cold War anti-Communism or McCarthyism that fed critical energy to this multidimensional movement of political repression. Yet I want to point out that many intellectuals at the time, such as Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, Nathan Glazer, and David Riesman, considered anti-Communism as “little more than a psychopathology,” focusing on its “fear of fear” nature (Robin 15). They argued that anti-Communism “rose from the status anxieties of an egalitarian society, which were foisted upon the state in the form of repressive legislation” (Robin 15). Like immigrants, unruly women, and colonial natives, communists were imagined as pathological objects through which “Americans could ... transform their existential anxiety into focused, galvanizing fear” (Robin 13).

The link between disease and otherness is neither an American phenomenon nor a nineteenth- and twentieth-century phenomenon. It is rather a universal phenomenon founded on humans’ instinctive fear of devastating disease. The enormous increase of medical knowledge, particularly in the fields of psychiatry, neurology, and microbiology, and the consequent growing professionalization and secularization of the medical profession at the turn of the twentieth century, however, still render the imagination of racial and sexual “others” as diseased and contagious in this period uniquely interesting and especially worthy of study. It was the beginning of modern times when people began to think that moral, social, and political issues ought not to be brought to bear on how

nature and disease were understood and that science and medicine should be carried on autonomously, completely separated from such issues. Nevertheless, the newly acquired knowledge of the nervous system and the immune system was utilized for the politicization of diseases like neurasthenia, hysteria, and bubonic plague to serve Anglo-Saxon American men's ideological and psychological needs. Indeed, without this knowledge, the age's "neurotic anxiety" over racial and sexual otherness would not be able to imagine (neurasthenia and hysteria) and distort (bubonic plague) the pathological object of fear and, therefore, produce the discourse of immunity to these diseases which entails imagined communities and borders among the different races and sexes.

W. J. T Mitchell observes that "[t]here are two systems in the human body that are capable of learning. One is the nervous system ...; the other is the immune system" (918). The nervous system "learns from experience" and "can accelerate its learning process with self-conscious reflection, critique, the preservation of memory and history" (919). The immune system "learns by 'clonal selection,' the production of antibodies which mirror the invading antigens and bond with them, killing them" (918).³ Given that "immunity is a form of cellular 'memory'" (919), both systems learn by experience and memory. Their capacity to experience and memorize attests to their privileged status, among other body systems, metaphorically conceived as the site of correspondence

³ Developing Danish immunologist Niels Jerne's hypothesis, Australian immunologist and Nobel Prize laureate Frank MacFarlane Burnet established "clonal selection theory" in 1941-1956 which, put simply, explains how immunological memory clones two types of lymphocyte; while one clone immediately combats infection, the other clone remains in the immune system to produce antibodies, which result in immunity to that antigen. See Burnet's "A Modification of Jerne's Theory of Antibody Production Using the Concept of Clonal Selection," a short article which is readable to those who are not familiar with medical terminology.

between body and mind. This might explain, in part, why the nervous system and the immune system played a crucial role in the politicization of disease and why white Americans' neurasthenia (and the others' immunity to it), unruly women's hysteria (and white men's immunity to it), and foreigners' bubonic plague could have such ideological significance. The image of the diseased other "invites us to see the collective, society, the nation, mankind, even all living things as 'one body'" (Mitchell, "Picturing" 917). Likewise, it invited turn-of-the-century Americans to see immigrants, disobedient women, and colonial natives as antigens that, threatening the integrity of their bodies and society, stimulated the production of immunity from any taint of otherness.

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